



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Finance
February 22, 2017 at 2:00 p.m.

By
Maenette Benham, Chancellor
University of Hawai'i – West O'ahu

HB 1279 HD1 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL FOOD PRODUCTION

Chair Luke, Vice Chair Cullen, and members of the committee:

The University of Hawai'i – West O'ahu (UHWO) supports HB 1279 HD1, which would appropriate funds to expand the existing educational programming in Sustainable Community Food Systems at UHWO in order to increase food security, self-sufficiency, economic development and food system resiliency in the State of Hawai'i.

The pressing social and ecological issues facing food systems today are complex and interrelated, defying single disciplinary solutions. Systematically advancing the goals of food security, resiliency and equity in Hawai'i will require educating new generations of food system professionals to think across traditional disciplinary boundaries to actively engage real-world challenges. The Sustainable Community Food System Program at UHWO provides a rich experiential, applied and multi-disciplinary undergraduate education that develops student comprehension of interrelated ecological and social issues in agriculture such that they may begin formulating meaningful responses to these challenges. Through a holistic study of the food system, the SCFS degree aims to develop highly skilled and civic-minded graduates prepared to advance the sustainable food and agriculture sector through new businesses and social enterprises, and preparing students for graduate-level training in disciplines such as Education, Hawaiian Studies, Natural Resource Management, Political Science or Urban and Regional Planning at UH Mānoa.

UHWO supports the following provisions of Section 2 of HB 1279 HD1:

- 1. Establishing scholarships for students to enroll in the Sustainable Community Food Systems program at the University of Hawai'i, West O'ahu.** The BAS-SCFS at UHWO will provide a world-class education to the historically underserved Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander population of West O'ahu. The SCFS program is designed to serve the NHPI population through the integrative study of traditional ecological knowledge and modern science with the objective of stewarding the agricultural resources of Hawai'i over the long-term. A scholarship program for SCFS will help assist adult learners in West O'ahu to access culturally relevant options in higher education while meeting state priorities.

- 2. Creating job opportunities and on-site training by creating positions for a full-time garden manager and part-time student assistants for the Student Organic Garden at the University of Hawai'i, West O'ahu.** The Student Organic Garden has grown to be a popular and dynamic living laboratory for the entire UHWO campus. Classes in SCFS, Mathematics, Political Science, Education and Hawaiian and Pacific Studies now regularly use the garden for experiential and hands-on learning. The garden serves hundreds of undergraduate and public school students each year. A permanent full-time garden manager position and part-time student employee positions for the garden will enable UHWO to continue to offer a wide range of high quality educational programming in sustainable horticulture, home gardening, cooking and nutrition.

- 3. Creating a Hawaiian Center for Sustainable Community Food Systems, a two hundred-acre education, training, outreach, food processing, and applied research center; provided that prior to creating and implementing the center the University of Hawai'i, West O'ahu, shall conduct and submit to the legislature a study that determines the feasibility and benefits of creating a center.** UHWO will conduct and submit to the legislature a study that determines the feasibility and benefits of creating a Hawaiian Center for Sustainable Community Food Systems (HCSCFS), a 200-acre multi-disciplinary and applied education center dedicated to advancing food security and sustainable economic development of the food system of Hawai'i and the Pacific. Through multiple program areas including certified organic production, youth leadership training, undergraduate and graduate education, organic farmer training, K-12 education, public workshops, food processing and applied agro-ecology research, the HCSCFS will provide the necessary educational and physical infrastructure to achieve a more sustainable, resilient and secure food system for the state of Hawai'i.

- 4. Implementing research projects, hosting conferences, and employing additional staff and faculty as the director of the program deems necessary.** To build upon prior success, the SCFS program is seeking additional funding to support applied agro-ecology and food system research, promote popular understanding of critical agriculture and food issues through public education, and build the SCFS program curriculum in the fields of indigenous natural resources management and epidemiology, public health and nutrition through the hiring of additional faculty members.

On behalf of the University of Hawai'i – West O'ahu, we thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 1279 HD1.

DAVID Y. IGE
Governor

SHAN S. TSUTSUI
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Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

PHYLLIS SHIMABUKURO-GEISER
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TESTIMONY OF SCOTT E. ENRIGHT
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

FEBRUARY 22, 2017
2:00 P.M.
CONFERENCE ROOM 308

HOUSE BILL NO. 1279 HD1
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL FOOD PRODUCTION

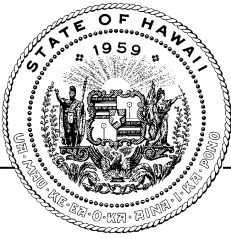
Chairperson Luke and Members of the Committee:

Thank for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 1279 HD1, which appropriates funds for the University of Hawaii, West Oahu, to expand its existing programs and develop new means to increase food security and self-sufficiency in the State. The department supports this bill.

The Department supports this measure as it looks to increase agricultural education at the University of Hawaii. Recent numbers from the 2012 US Agricultural Census has found the average age of farmers in Hawaii is over 63 years old. It is the Department's goal to reverse this trend by continuing to work with our state partners to encourage a new generation of agriculturalists dedicated to improving Hawaii's food security and self-sufficiency.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.





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DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR

LEO R. ASUNCION
DIRECTOR
OFFICE OF PLANNING

Statement of
LEO R. ASUNCION
Director, Office of Planning
before the
HOUSE COMMITTEES ON FINANCE
Wednesday, February 22, 2017
2:00 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 308

in consideration of
HB 1279, HD1
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL FOOD PRODUCTION.

Chair Luke, Vice Chair Cullen, and Members of the House Committees on Finance.

The Office of Planning (“OP”) supports the intent of HB 1279, HD1 however, we prefer the language provided in SB 1313.

HB 1279, HD1 proposes to improve food security and self-sufficiency in the State by encouraging the development and expansion of higher education focused on sustainable food systems. The measure appropriates funds for the University of Hawaii, West Oahu, to expand its existing programs and develop new means to increase food security and self-sufficiency in the State.

However, SB 1313 takes a broader view of food security and self-sufficiency in the state by requiring the Department of Agriculture (DOA) to establish a strategy and goals for increase food security and self-sufficiency in line with the recommendations of the *2012 Increased Food Security and Food Self-Sufficiency Strategy* (Strategy). SB 1313 appropriates funds to assist the DOA to produce project promotional materials along with other endeavors; expand and improve branding and labeling program for locally grown food; promote farmers markets; a farm to school pilot program in charter schools of the state; develop good agricultural practices for school gardens; establishment of specialists to certify farm food safety; develop regional agriculture infrastructure master plans; restore positions in food inspection, pest control, and biosecurity; restore positions in market research and agricultural statistics. Funding would also assist the University of Hawaii to provide funding for research, training, and education on agricultural food development and food security.

The efforts of SB 1313 work toward implementing the strategic objectives of the three strategic objectives of the Strategy: (1) Increasing demand for and access to locally grown foods; (2) Increasing production of locally grown foods; and (3) Providing policy and organizational support to meet food self-sufficiency needs. OP agrees with the importance of promoting an

understanding of sustainable food production and training a new generation of students for jobs in the sustainable food and agriculture sector in meeting the strategic objectives of the *Increased Food Security and Food Self-Sufficiency Strategy*.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.

Board Members

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Date: February 21, 2017

To: Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair, Representative Ty J.K. Cullen, Vice-Chair, and members of the Committee on Finance

From: Brent Kakesako, Hawai'i Alliance for Community-Based Economic Development (HACBED)

Re: Support for HB1279 HD1

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice-Chair Hashem, and Committee Members,

The Hawai'i Alliance for Community-Based Economic Development (HACBED) supports HB1279 HD1, which would appropriate funds for the University of Hawai'i West O'ahu (UHWO) to expand its existing programs and develop new means to increase food security and self-sufficiency in the State.

HACBED was established in 1992 as a nonprofit statewide intermediary to *address social, economic, and environmental justice concerns through community-based economic development*. It advances its mission with core competencies in the areas of community and organizational capacity building, community and economic development planning, and asset policy development and advocacy. Over time, what has rung true across the different communities HACBED has been blessed to support is the importance of choice and control in the lives of families across the state to achieve their vision for genuine wealth – and within the context of food, this has been no different. HACBED has supported a network of community-based organizations over the past three years to continue the work of restoring ancestral abundance. Under that broader framework, this loose network focused its efforts on shifting our institutions and systems tied to food and knowledge production.

A key part of that work was supporting the burgeoning Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS) in Sustainable Community Food Systems (SCFS) at UHWO, “a multi-disciplinary, experiential and applied education program about key ecological and social issues in food and agricultural systems.”¹ The SCFS degree was born out of community-based organizations, like MA'O Organic Farms, who saw the need for pathways that were relevant to their communities and by extension their youth. The BAS reflects this desire and need as well as meets existing shifts around workforce development, such as the new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act as it “incorporates problem-based and hands-on learning to develop food system professional capable of solving real-world problems and transitioning Hawai'i agriculture toward greater ecological sustainability and social equity.”²

¹ <http://www.uhwo.hawaii.edu/academics/degrees-and-certificates/bachelor-of-applied-sciences/food-systems/>

² Ibid.

In reaching out to teachers and students in the natural resources and agriculture academies within the public high schools in UHWO's service area, including Nānākuli, Wai'anae, Kapolei, Campbell, Leilehua, Waialua, and Kahuku, HACBED heard resounding support for the program and its fits with the interests of the students in those regions – and their particular desires to return to their communities to support them and improve them. Yet HACBED also heard about current challenges in terms of time and resource constraints on teachers as well as the lack of support, training, and mentoring to incorporate concepts tied to food security and food self-sufficiency into their courses. A lot of the groundwork we have done would inform and potentially fulfill large parts of the requirement for a feasibility and benefits study that was inserted as an amendment to HB1279 by the Committee on Higher Education.

As such, passage of HB1279 HD1 would support an institution of higher learning within a community that is hungry for these offerings and alleviate broader issues of food security and self-sufficiency by offering the following opportunities that would essentially be a systemic approach to shifting our response and actions:

- *Scholarships* – support for students to enroll at UHWO and further their knowledge of sustainable food systems;
- *Research* – support for staff and faculty to broaden their knowledge and that of UHWO, and by extension the students;
- *Gatherings* – support for the community to learn alongside the faculty and students of UHWO;
- *Jobs & On-Site Training* – support for students to have paid, hands-on opportunities to apply their knowledge;
- *Center* – 200-acre center that would provide education, training, outreach, food processing, and applied research capabilities and support for the different stakeholders across the food system.

Increasing the ability of families to grow their own food will build their self-sufficiency and by extension the self-sufficiency and food security for the entire state. As such, HB1279 HD1 would support programs that build these critical skills within the context of current opportunities to address systemic challenges facing all of our families statewide.

Please let me know if you may have any additional questions at (808)550-2661 or bkakesako@hacbed.org.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify,

Brent N. Kakesako
Executive Director