

Working for You...
AND THE STATE OF HAWAII

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz

HAWAII STATE SENATE - DISTRICT 22
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October 2016

Majority Whip

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Member: Committees on Education; Government Operations; Water, Land and Agriculture.



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NEARLY 900 ACRES OF FARMLAND TO BE PRESERVED IN CENTRAL OAHU

This past session, I worked with my colleagues to appropriate \$31.5 million to the Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC) for the purchase of 895 acres of agricultural land in Central Oahu. Governor David Ige recently signed the release of the \$31.5 million. When the acquisition is completed, these lands along with other parcels pending transaction, will increase the farmable acreage in the Whitmore Project from the initial 1,200 acres to over 2,800 acres.

Since Dole announced its plans to sell nearly 18,000 acres of land in Central Oahu and on the North Shore, I have worked to ensure that the state acquires additional lands near the 1,200 acres. Under ADC's management, these lands will be protected in perpetuity for farming.

Supporting agricultural acquisitions is the first step towards food sustainability. The Governor recently announced his plans to double local food production. According to the Increased Food Security and Food Self-Sufficiency Strategy report, replacing just 10% of the food Hawaii currently imports would amount to approximately \$313 million remaining in the state. Without access to good farmland, farmers are unable to scale up their crop production affecting our reliance on imported foods and sending dollars out of the local economy.

This past summer, I attended a harvest by Sugarland Farms, a tenant of the Whitmore Project, as they celebrated their first crops on a portion of the 1,200 acres. Sugarland Farms produced an estimated 2.7 million pounds of watermelon and 750,000 pounds of bell pepper. Crops were sold for local consumption, helping to replace imported products. The harvest of two different crops are examples of diversified agriculture that can be accomplished in Central Oahu.

Other components of the Whitmore Project that I have completed or continue to work on include an ag-foreign trade zone, re-designation and expansion of Enterprise Zone No.1, creation of an ag-technology park to consolidate processing and packaging facilities, workforce housing for farm employees, establishment of K-12 workforce training, and reclaiming wastewater for irrigation from the Wahiawa Wastewater Treatment Plant.

As the above mentioned report indicates, increasing agricultural production is an economic benefit to Hawaii. Acquiring 895 acres to expand the agricultural footprint of the Whitmore Project ensures farmers have access to land that will be used to produce food. I will continue to support these efforts so we can guarantee the protection of agricultural land for farming activities.

COMMUNITY UPDATES

Wahiawa selected as a finalist for the Blue Zones Project

Wahiawa is one of five communities in the final running to become an HMSA/Healthways Blue Zones Project Demonstration Community. The Wahiawa Community Based Development Organization is leading the effort for this designation.

The Blue Zones Project is a major initiative to improve the well-being and longevity of all Hawaii residents with a proven track record. Communities in Iowa, Minnesota, and California have lowered their health care costs, increased productivity and measurably improved the quality of life for their residents.



Part of the process included presenting to the Site Selection Committee on why Wahiawa should be selected. I spoke in support of Wahiawa's designation because our community shows the necessary community factors, motivation, and readiness/commitment to receive support as a Blue Zones Demonstration Community.

The ability to make healthier choices will have positive effects on our community. I look forward to seeing what can be achieved through the Blue Zones Project. For more information on the Blue Zones Project, please visit hawaii.bluezonesproject.com.

Helemano Elementary School recognized as a National Blue Ribbon School

Helemano Elementary School is one of two Hawaii schools that will be recognized by the 2016 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program. The program honors public and private elementary, middle and high schools based on academic excellence and progress closing the achievement gap.

The U.S. Department of Education will formally recognize all 329 schools at an awards ceremony in Washington, D.C. where each school will receive an engraved plaque and program flag.

According to the Hawaii Department of Education, students at Helemano Elementary are motivated to achieve their highest potential and excel academically, emotionally, socially and physically. With strong collaborative partnerships with parents, the Wahiawa community and the U.S. military, Helemano provides opportunities for students beyond traditional core subjects, including fine arts, physical education, music, and social emotional learning.

