

From: BSGTrust [bsgtrust@gmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, January 30, 2008 12:22 AM
To: AGRtestimony
Subject: HB 2453.doc

H.B. NO. 2453 A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO TARO

1/29/08

AGR. Hearing Conference Rm.325 @ 8:30 A.M. 1/30/08
IN SUPPORT OF THE BILL BY Richard Sommery-Gade a Resident of Hawaii.

There are a few more, but equally important reasons, to support this bill. Currently we are teaching and encouraging a whole new generation of keiki in our schools on the whole cycle of Taro farming and production, that is producing the Taro farmers of tomorrow. In a lot of instances these programs are being funded for the purpose of preserving this important part of Hawaiian culture for future generations. We have to secure for these farmers of the future that there will be a secure base from which they will be able to continue this most important part of Hawaiian life and history. We should not waste all the time, energy and public money that we have invested so far, to lose it in the future due to lack of foresight now.

In addition history has shown us that it is all too easy to give into modern easier, more efficient ways of living due to economic and societal pressures, only to regret it within a very short time. Taro is not just an ethnic issue but one of common sense as it can, in hard times, be a good basic food source that we can readily grow without depending on outside food sources, in times of trouble. Fish, taro & fruit can meet our basic needs to survive if we are cut off and have to make it on our own.

Oddly enough our tourism depends on our being able to serve it to tourists and export it to our relatives who can't live without it.

Mahalo,

Richard Sommery - Gade

Richard Sommery - Gade

LATE
Testimony

Late

To: Honorable Representative Clift Tsuji, Chair, House Agriculture Committee
Honorable Representative Ken Ito, Chair, House Water, Land, Ocean Resources and
Hawaiian Affairs Committee

From: Jim Cain, taro farmer, Waipi'o, Hawai'i
Jerry Konanui, taro farmer, Puna, Hawai'i
Paul Reppun, taro farmer, Waiahole, O'ahu
Penny Levin, taro farmer, Ke'anae, Maui

Relating to Bills:

HB2451 Relating to agriculture - taro farmer education and training program;
HB2452 Relating to agriculture - agribusiness incubator program; taro farmers;
HB2453 Relating to taro – appropriation taro farming grant program; and
HB2454 Relating to public lands – DLNR, taro

Hearing date: Wednesday morning, the 30th of January from 8:30am, Conf. Rm 325

Date: 30 January 2008

Aloha Honorable Chairs Tsuji and Ito and Committee Members;

We are taro farmers from the islands of Hawai'i, O'ahu, Kaua'i and Maui and members of 'Onipa'a Nā Hui Kalo. *We are testifying neither in favor, nor against HB2451, 2452, 2453 or 2454 at this time. We are requesting that the Agriculture Committee and the Water, Land and Hawaiian Affairs Committee defer the hearing of these four bills for one to two weeks.*

Last year, there was a growing awareness among state legislators of the many problems impacting taro farmers' survival. During the summer of 2007, many of you visited taro farms across the state and heard about the struggles farmers have in continuing to grow and protect this culturally important and sustainable food crop. We appreciate the response, demonstrated by the number of taro bills before you this year.

In October, 2007, under the direction of SCR206 which called on the Department of Agriculture to develop a non-gmo taro security and purity research program, the DOA convened a gathering of taro farmers, researchers from UH CTAHR and HARC, agriculture extension agents, botanical gardens and representatives from OHA, the Farm Bureau and DOA. While no final agreements were made regarding the direction of non-gmo taro research, all participants agreed that the dialogue was positive and that it needed to continue.

At that meeting; however, a very clear message emerged from farmers. Taro farmers themselves need to be at the table and full partners in decision-making and program development with agencies and institutions. Our undeniable expertise stems from decades and centuries of work in the lo'i.

These four House bills (2451, 22452, 2453, and 2454) have had no input from taro farmers. As currently written, the bills have the potential to be helpful, but they have a greater potential to be wasteful of taxpayers, the state's and taro farmers time and money in the service of politics without real change.

This afternoon (Wednesday, January 30th at 1:30pm) the House Chair and Vice-Chair of the Agriculture Committee, representatives from the Hawaiian Caucus, Chair and Vice-Chair of the Senate Agriculture and Hawaiian Affairs Committee, the Chair of the Department of Agriculture, Associate Dean of the UH College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources, and representatives of OHA, poi producers and taro farmers have agreed to sit down together and discuss the taro bills before the 2008 legislature in hopes that the bills that come before you are legislation that conserves and coordinates resources, brings new partnerships to the table, and truly serves taro farmers in the highest good.

It is for this reason that we request the hearing of these bills be deferred for one to two weeks.

Mahalo.

Paul Pepp
Chuck Pepp
Jann M. Cini
Jerry Konanni
pepp