

**LINDA LINGLE**  
Governor



**SANDRA LEE KUNIMOTO**  
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

**DUANE OKAMOTO**  
Deputy to the Chairperson

State of Hawaii  
**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**  
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**TESTIMONY OF SANDRA LEE KUNIMOTO  
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

**BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEES ON AGRICULTURE AND WATER, LAND, OCEAN  
RESOURCES & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS  
JANUARY 30, 2008  
8:30 A.M.**

**HOUSE BILL NO. 2454  
RELATING TO PUBLIC LANDS**

Chairperson Tsuji, Chairperson Ito and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on House Bill No. 2454. The purpose of this bill is to require the Board of Land and Natural Resources to provide reduced lease rent rates for taro farmers on state leased land. The Hawaii Department of Agriculture (HDOA) appreciates the effort to stimulate taro production in Hawaii but does not support setting a different lease rent for one particular crop.

The HDOA has agricultural parks and other agricultural lands that it leases to farmers. We have the flexibility to base the lease rent on an income approach rather than just using the market value based on appraisals. Even in the income based approach, we would not base it on the income of a single crop. We would instead set up broad agricultural categories to derive a "typical" expected income for that category or take a sampling of farming enterprises in the area to derive a reasonable average. Basing lease rents on a single crop can raise many complications, especially when a farmer may raise more than one crop or switch crops.



Legislative Testimony  
**HB 2454, RELATING TO PUBLIC LANDS**  
House Committees on Agriculture  
and Water, Land, Ocean & Hawaiian Affairs

January 30, 2007  
Room: 325

8:30 a.m.

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The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) SUPPORTS H.B. 2454, which would require the State Land Board to provide reduced lease rent rates at the beginning of a lease to qualified farmers who farm taro on public land.

OHA would like to point out that taro is a sacred plant in Hawaiian culture, considered to be the elder sibling of Native Hawaiians, and poi - made from the corm of taro - is the staple of the traditional Hawaiian diet.

We believe that this bill would encourage farmers to enter into this field, thereby increasing taro production, which has reached record lows in recent years. Moreover, by encouraging taro farming, the bill supports Hawaiian culture and adds to Hawai'i's sense of place.

OHA urges the Committee to PASS H.B. 2454. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

HAWAII FARM BUREAU FEDERATION  
2343 ROSE STREET  
HONOLULU, HI 96819

JANUARY 30, 2008

HEARING BEFORE THE  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WATER, LAND, OCEAN RESOURCES  
AND HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

TESTIMONY ON HB 2454  
RELATING TO TARO

Chairs Tsuji and Ito and committee members:

My name is Alan Takemoto, Executive Director, of the Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation, which is the largest non-profit general agriculture organization representing approximately 1,600 farm and ranch family members statewide.

The Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation supports HB 2454, which requires the Board of Land and Natural Resources to provide reduced lease rent rates for taro farmers on state leased land. This measure is aimed to assist taro farmers in their efforts to increase their production and viability. Farm Bureau supports this effort to improve the taro farmer's ability to not only sustain themselves but also to expand their long term success.

We urge this committee to approve the passage of this measure.

Thank you.



## **Maui County Farm Bureau**

*An Affiliate of the American Farm Bureau Federation and Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation  
Serving Maui's Farmers and Ranchers*

### **TESTIMONY**

**HB 2454  
HB 2451  
HB2452**

### **RELATING TO AGRICULTURE**

#### **HEARING BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE**

Chair Tsuji Committee Members:

My name is Warren Watanabe, Executive Director of the Maui County Farm Bureau, a non-profit general agriculture organization and an affiliate of the Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation.

MCFB on behalf of our member farmers, ranchers and agricultural organizations, respectfully requests your strong support of HB2454, HB2541 and HB2452, requiring the Board of Land and Natural Resources to provide support for taro farmers in the State.

These measures have been identified by taro farmers as an important factors to increase their viability. Farm Bureau supports measures that assist farmers to improve their ability to not only sustain but expand and improve their operations to ensure their long term success.

Your support by approving these measures will help sustain and grow agriculture for tomorrow.

We respectfully request your support towards the passage of this measure.

Respectfully submitted,

Warren K. Watanabe  
Executive Director  
MCFB

**Hawaii  
Crop  
Improvement  
Association**

Adolph Helm, President-Elect  
19 Hua'ai Road, PO Box 339  
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Phone: 808-567-9421

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HB2454, Public Lands  
House AGR/WLH Committees  
Wednesday, Jan. 30, 2008  
Room 325: 8:30 am

Position: Support

Chairs Tsuji and Ito, and Members of the Hse AGR/WLH Committees:

My name is Adolph Helm. I am a Molokai resident, and Project Manager of Dow Agro-Science, an HCIA member company. The HCIA represents seed production and research facilities operating in Hawaii for nearly 40 years. The HCIA is comprised of five member companies that farm an estimated 8,000 acres on four islands, valued at \$97.6 million in operating budget (2006/2007 HASS). We are proud members of Hawaii's diversified agriculture and life sciences industries.

Appreciation is expressed for the House Agriculture Chair and the many legislators who support this measure and the other taro measures on the agenda. While HCIA member companies do not grow taro, nor do we plan to grow taro, we support the preservation and protection of taro in Hawaii.

This measure would provide reduced lease rent rates for those qualified taro farmers on public lease lands. Such a measure may encourage more young people and families to seriously think about growing taro. Increasing the number of taro growers will lend to the stability of taro in Hawaii.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

# HPACH

919 4th Street  
Pearl City, Hawaii 96782

January 30, 2008

Representative Clift Tsuji, Chair  
Representative Tom Brower, Vice Chair  
and Committee Members, Committee on Agriculture  
Representative Ken Ito, Chair  
Representative Jon Riki Karamatsu, Vice Chair  
And Committee Member, Committee on Water, Land  
Ocean Resources & Hawaiian Affairs  
House of Representatives, The Twenty-Fourth Legislature  
Regualr Session of 2008, State of Hawaii

Subject: HB 2454 Relating To Public Lands, SUPPORT

ALOHA Kakou,

My name is Richard Pomaikaikalani Kinney. As Sovereign of the Hawaiian Political Action Council of Hawaii, I SUPPORT the passage of HB 2454.

Under the Admission Act of the State of Hawaii the Public Lands are held in a Public Land Trust. One of the conditions of the Public Land Trust is "for the development of farm and home ownership on a wide base as possible."

Since the ownership of land in Hawaii is beyond the means of most Native Hawaiians and the general public, I support HB 2454 to be amended that the lease rent rates for taro farmers on state leased lands be set by this Legislature to be \$1.00 per year.

Much of Hawaii's Trust Lands are leased out for \$1.00 a year, including Trust Lands of the Hawaiian Homes Department. Most famous are the Public Trust Lands of Makua that leased out for \$1.00 for the entire term of the 65 Year Lease!

When in time of hardship it is the duty of you who serve in this Legislature to reduce the cost of living for the Native Hawaiians and the general public of Hawaii. Reducing the cost of producing taro products as well for those who buy and enjoy poi and other taro products sold in Hawaii .

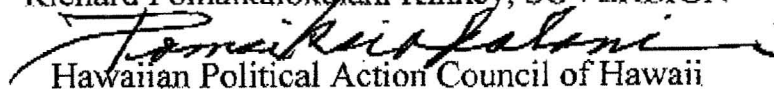
Taro should be the Number One Agriculture Crop produced in Hawaii.

**HPACH**  
919 4th Street  
Pearl City, Hawaii 96782

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HB 2454

Once more, HPACH strongly Supports the passage of HB 2454.  
Mahalo for the opportunity to present testimony of this important Bill.

Richard Pomaikaiokalani Kinney, SOVEREIGN



Hawaiian Political Action Council of Hawaii

Email: [HIAHAWAII@aol.com](mailto:HIAHAWAII@aol.com)