

HONOLULU FIRE DEPARTMENT
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

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MUFI HANNEMANN
MAYOR



KENNETH G. SILVA
FIRE CHIEF

ALVIN K. TOMITA
DEPUTY FIRE CHIEF

February 19, 2008

The Honorable Ken Ito, Chair
Committee on Water, Land Use,
Ocean Resources, and Hawaiian Affairs
House of Representatives
State Capitol, Room 420
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Ito:

Subject: H.B. 2467, H.D. 1 Relating to Fire Protection

I am Alvin K. Tomita, Acting Fire Chief of the Honolulu Fire Department (HFD). The HFD offers the following comment to H.B. 2467, H.D. 1, which proposes to improve fire protection by amending the State Fire Code to include requirements for any property on which the county does not have jurisdiction over road and sign standards, minimum private water supply reserves, fuel breaks, and green belts. The HFD believes this bill proposal is not necessary because the current State Fire Code includes these requirements for properties not under county jurisdiction.

Should you have any questions, please call HFD Legislative Liaison Lloyd Rogers at 723-7171.

Sincerely,


ALVIN K. TOMITA
Acting Fire Chief

AKT/LR:cn



Food Company Hawaii

1116 Whitmore Avenue Wahiawa, Hawaii 96786

LATE TESTIMONY

February 20, 2008

Honorable Ken Ito, Chair, Committee on Water, Land, Ocean Resources & Hawaiian Affairs
Hawai'i State Capitol, Conference Room 312
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: HB 2467 HD 1 RELATING TO FIRE PROTECTION - OPPOSE

Chair Ito and Members of the Committee:

I am Dan Nellis, Operations Director of Dole Food Company Hawaii ("Dole"). Thank you for the opportunity to share our views on **HB 2467 HD 1** relating to fire protection.

The purpose of this bill is to include requirements in the state fire code for any property over which the county has no jurisdiction related to:

- A. Road standards for fire equipment access;
- B. Sign standards to expedite the identification of streets, roads, and buildings;
- C. Minimum private water supply reserve for emergency fire use; and
- D. Fuel breaks and green belts. As used in this paragraph:
 - a. "Fuel break" means a wide strip of land from which the vegetation is permanently reduced or removed so that fires can be more readily extinguished.
 - b. "Green belt" means an area of land on which development is strictly controlled.

Dole supports efforts to increase safety and to decrease our exposure to disasters like the Waialua fire which occurred in August 2007. We have in place a best practices program for maintaining firebreak cuttings in the dry season. Additionally, the fire chief has authority provided by the Fire Code of the City and County of Honolulu to have property owners establish fire breaks when a fire hazard is identified. So we have some concerns with requiring further mitigation, especially on conservation lands.

As you are well aware, farmers and landowners are seeking incentives through the Important Agricultural Lands designation process to help make farming more viable in Hawaii. This bill runs contrary to the IAL efforts by placing undue financial burdens on landowners and farmers in the following ways:

- A. Dole Food Company owns many miles of private plantation roads on the North Shore of Oahu. These roads are built and maintained to a standard that makes them useable for agricultural operations, however, they can be traversed by the majority of emergency response vehicles. Most of the public roadway designs are dictated by accessibility for emergency response vehicles. Once similar standards are adopted for private plantation roads, they will no doubt be set to a very high standard to insure that every type of emergency vehicle can travel on the road. There is simply no way that an agricultural plantation can afford to upgrade the private roadways.
- B. Most of the roads and buildings on farms do not have names. Therefore to require signage will also require that all of the roads and buildings must be named. This would be a huge effort for relatively little benefit.
- C. In many areas of the state, the agricultural land is not irrigated because there is no water supply. The financial impact of having to build private water supplies for emergency fire use would be cost prohibitive.
- D. As we mentioned earlier, Dole cuts fire breaks just prior to the dry season as standard practice. However, to require permanent fuel breaks means that the land cannot be used even during the wet seasons. That land, in effect has no agricultural use. As previously stated, there are a number of efforts to help make agriculture more viable in the state. Taking more land out of production runs contrary to these efforts. In addition, land in the Conservation district falls under the definition of lands covered by this bill. Maintaining fuel breaks would involve large quantities of herbicides, which is contrary to the concept of stewardship of conservation land.

As the owner of more than 28,000 acres of agricultural land and conservation land in the state, we understand the devastation of wild land fires. However, there is simply no way that private landowners would be able to comply with this law. **For these reasons, we ask you to vote no on HB 2467 HD 1.**

As always, we are grateful for the opportunity to share our views with you.

Sincerely,
Dan Nellis
Operations Manager, Dole Food Company Hawaii