

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI‘I SYSTEM

LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY



SB 2236 – RELATING TO EDUCATION

Written Testimony Only
Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Education

February 4, 2008 at 1:15 pm
by

John Morton
Vice President for Community Colleges
University of Hawai'i System

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Chair Sakamoto, Vice Chair Tokuda, and Members of the Committee:

The UH Community Colleges is in support of the intent of S.B. 2236 that makes an appropriation of funds and a 1.00 FTE position to the University of Hawai'i, Leeward Community College (LCC) to support the Wai'anae Organic Agriculture Center, improve food security on the Wai'anae Coast, and help the youth participants in the Center's program successfully transition to degree programs at Leeward Community College.

LCC entered into a partnership with the Wai'anae Organic Agriculture Center (MA`O Farms), a project of the Wai'anae Coast Redevelopment Corporation, in 2002. An initial part of the collaboration was a successful grant application to obtain \$600,000 in funding from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Office of University Partnership Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian Institutions Assisting Communities program to improve facilities at MA`O Farms and increase community awareness of the issues surrounding food security. From this start to the present, LCC has strongly supported the two strategic goals of MA`O Farms: championing food security and helping the "at risk" youth in the program transition into college level programs at LCC.

One strategy in achieving these goals has been the development of a food security curriculum. The Academic Subject Certificate (ASC) in Community Food Security is comprised of four new specialized courses and courses in Hawaiian Studies, Native Nutrition and Lifestyle, and Environmental Science. The latter courses serve to ground the ASC in a Hawaiian "sense of place" and the value of caring for the "aina." Not only does the ASC increase expertise in food security, but it also provides a supportive cohort for students transitioning to Leeward Community College from MA`O.

Given the fact that youth in the MA`O Farms program come from disadvantaged backgrounds and have academic deficiencies, promoting student success has been very challenging. To this end, MA`O Farms and LCC have collaborated in establishing and funding a temporary Educational Coordinator position to provide intensive counseling and tutoring for MA`O Farm youth as well as assisting in financial aid.

Funding sources for this project have been grants and college innovation funds, but these funding sources cannot sustain this project and, therefore, funds and a position have been requested to institutionalize this effort.

Leeward Community College supports the intent of this bill, however it should not displace items in the Board of Regents' approved University budget request.