



**SB 2499, HD 1, RELATING TO TARO**  
House Committee on Judiciary

March 28, 2008

2:00 p.m.

Room: 325

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS, with amendments**, S.B. 2499, H.D. 1, which would change the effective date of Act 36, Session Laws of Hawaii 2007, from January 1, 2025, to after the completion of community dialogue with native Hawaiians and students from all islands and those who identify themselves as Hawaiians, a process that will be conducted by the Department of Education through its existing curriculum.

OHA was supportive of Act 36, which made kalo the official plant of Hawai'i, and we urge the Legislature to amend this bill back to its original form, which called for Act 36 to take effect on July 1, 2008.

As the Legislature knows, kalo is a sacred plant in Hawaiian culture, considered to be the elder sibling of Native Hawaiians. Furthermore, poi - made from the corm of taro - is the staple of the traditional Hawaiian diet.

Requiring further community input on this act is arbitrary, unnecessary and unfair. The various committee reports on this bill indicate only community support for the measure, with no opposition. Moreover, the various committee reports on H.B. 659, which was eventually enacted as Act 36 in 2007, also show only support for making kalo the state plant. What's more, additional community dialogue was not required for Act 67, Session Laws of Hawaii 2006, which re-established the humuhumunukunukuapua'a as the state fish.

OHA appreciates that the Legislature clearly values the opinions of the Native Hawaiian community, especially with regard to such a culturally significant plant. But it is precisely due to the significance of kalo that the Hawaiian community believes it should be designated as Hawai'i's state plant as soon as possible. Instead of

having the Department of Education consult with students about this bill, the agency should be educating Hawai'i's keiki about the historic, cultural, spiritual and health-related importance of kalo and why no other plant more suitably represents Hawai'i.

Therefore, OHA urges the Committee to amend S.B. 2499, H.D. 1, back to its original form and PASS the bill.  
Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

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