

SB 2915

LINDA LINGLE
Governor



SANDRA LEE KUNIMOTO
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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TESTIMONY OF SANDRA LEE KUNIMOTO
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON AGRICULTURE AND HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS AND
INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND MILITARY AFFAIRS
FEBRUARY 7, 2008
2:45 P.M.

SENATE BILL NO. 2915
RELATING TO TARO

Chairpersons Tokuda and Inouye and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill No. 2915 relating to taro. The purpose of this bill is to create the Taro Security and Purity Task Force and to appropriate funds for that purpose. The department offers comments.

During the 2007 legislative session, taro farmers and members of the Native Hawaiian community expressed growing concern over increasing threats to taro. Senate Concurrent Resolution 206 was adopted in April 2007, and requested the department to develop a taro security and purity research program that is designed to ensure that taro can be saved and protected from natural attack.

The program requires two parts: 1) regulatory elements that will be implemented in conjunction with the Congressional delegation, Legislature, and federal quarantine agencies through the implementation of the department's biosecurity program; and 2) non-regulatory elements through the establishment of a task force that would guide policy and prioritize research for the protection of taro in Hawaii.

The Hawaii Department of Agriculture's proper role in the program is to provide increased protection for taro through the implementation of the biosecurity program.

LATE



SB2915, RELATING TO TARO

Senate Committee on Agriculture and Hawaiian Affairs

February 7, 2008

2:45 p.m.

Room: 224

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS** S.B. 2915, which would establish the Taro Security and Purity Task Force within the state Department of Agriculture. The task force would be funded with \$650,000 from the state general fund for the 2008-2009 fiscal year. The task force would be responsible for continuing the dialogue on protecting taro among taro farmers, the Native Hawaiian community, scientists and various government agencies.

OHA commends the positive and productive dialogue on the protection of taro that occurred throughout 2007 as a result of Senate Concurrent Resolution 206, Session Laws of Hawaii 2007.

We believe that continued dialogue is needed to revive the taro industry and to ensure that the culturally significant practice of mahi'ai kalo (taro farming) continues to thrive.

OHA urges the Committee to PASS S.B. 2915. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Personal Testimony Presented
before the
Senate Committee on Agriculture and Hawaiian Affairs
February 7, 2008
2:45 p.m.
by
Dr. Andrew G. Hashimoto

SB 2915, Relating to Taro

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

My name is Andrew Hashimoto. I serve as the Dean of UH Manoa College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR) and an ex-officio member of the Board of Agriculture. I am pleased to provide this personal testimony on Senate Bill 2915, which creates the taro security and purity task force and appropriates funds for that purpose. This testimony does not represent the position of the University of Hawaii.

I support SB 2915.

CTAHR recognizes and respects the cultural significance of Hawaiian taro. We know that recent years have seen heated debate as to what our college's role should be in protecting this beloved crop. We have been participating in dialogue with taro farmers from each island, the Hawaii Department of Agriculture, the Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation, and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs. The parties engaged in this dialogue feel that an important next step is to form a taro security and purity task force that will guide policy and prioritize research, education, and preservation efforts to sustain taro farming in Hawaii and help taro growers achieve greater economic viability.

CTAHR looks forward to participating on the task force and welcomes this opportunity to work closely with and receive feedback from taro growers throughout the state. I am confident that the formation of this task force will create learning opportunities and exchanges that can help secure the future of taro and taro-growing communities in Hawaii.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

testimony

From: Joel Fischer [jfischer@hawaii.edu]
Sent: Wednesday, February 06, 2008 12:51 PM
To: testimony
Subject: SB2915; AHW; 2/7; 2:45PM; Rm 224

Importance: High

SB2915, Relating to Taro
AHW; Chair, Sen Tokuda

PLEASE PASS THIS BILL.

Thank you to Senator English and the other senators who signed this bill for introducing it.

Recently, there was a crisis of faith at the UH because researchers were seeking patents on, and wanting to genetically modify, the kalo. Eventually, after an intense struggle, the UH relented and gave up its patents. This was a true victory for the people.

The reason there was a crisis of faith, and not just in administration competence, was because of the failure of many at UH to understand the significance of the kalo to the native people of Hawai'i.

This bill seems to be a direct result of that conflict at UH. We don't need any more of these problems in Hawai'i nei!!

Please support the rights of the kanaka maoli and pass this bill.

Thank you.

Aloha, joel

Dr. Joel Fischer, ACSW
President, 19-3, Democratic Party

Professor
University of Hawai'i, School of Social Work Henke Hall Honolulu, HI 96822

"It is reasonable that everyone who asks justice should DO justice."
Thomas Jefferson

"There comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular, but one must take it because one's conscience tells one that it is right."
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

"Never, never, never quit."
Winston Churchill

LATE**testimony**

From: jim cain [kinglaulau@hotmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, February 06, 2008 7:10 PM
To: testimony
Cc: kinglaulau@hotmail.com
Subject: SB2915 Thur. Feb. 7, 2008 @ 2:24 Room 224

Aloha,

My name is Jim Cain. My family and I farm taro in Waipi'o Valley on the Big Island. We also own and operate a family run poi shop where we process the taro from our 6 acre farm, as well as taro we obtain from other farmers, providing poi for our Big Island community. I fully support SB2915 that calls for the formation of a taro task force. SCR206 which came out of last year's session, authorized DOA to develop a taro security and purity program, opened up state-wide dialogue between taro farmers, DOA, Farm Bureau, and CTAHR. At the final stakeholder's meeting in Oct. 2007, it was agreed that dialogue should continue and that this should be in the form of a funded task force that would include representatives from all the above parties. (See DOA report in response to SCR206). At a meeting held last week at the Capitol, attended by reps from all the afore mentioned parties it was again unanimously agreed upon to proceed with the task force. I would like to suggest some changes to the initial bill.

Section 2. Instead of DOA, OHA should be the administrative agency. Both DOA and OHA have agreed to these changes. We are looking into matching funding to be contributed by OHA.

Section 8. Subsections 1, 2 and 5 should be combined and should read:

\$375,000 for the convening of the taro security and purity task force and the conducting of dialogues on all islands, developing and implementing programs that will support the work of taro growers, retaining a minimum of at least one person to facilitate, coordinate, communicate, and record the work of the task force, and prepare the final report to be submitted to the legislature.

The proposed changes would give the task force the much needed flexibility to actually perform concrete steps to help the taro farmers. Again, I would like to stress the agreement from all parties that this would be the most effective way to move forward to coordinate our efforts and help the taro farmers. Any time we can build support and cooperation from the ground (or should I say lo'i) up, we stand to have much more support and buy-in from all. From the taro farmers of Waipi'o Valley, I thank you for you support.

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