

## testimony

---

**From:** vivien lee [leereppun@hotmail.com]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 19, 2008 9:54 PM  
**To:** testimony  
**Subject:** SB2915

To: Senate Ways and Means Committee  
Chair: Rosaly Baker  
Re: SB2915, taro task force

As Oahu taro farmers we participated in the first Taro Security and Purity meeting convened by the DoA. While no consensus was reached on many of the issues, all of the participants agreed that this kind of convening of agencies, farmers, and scientists was very useful and should be continued. The opportunity for dialogue was much appreciated and long over due. Taro farmers face many serious threats, some of which have the potential of virtually destroying the industry. In order to meet the challenges ahead of us we need to continue to dialogue with scientists and decision makers to find workable solutions.

Paul Reppun  
Charles Reppun

---

Helping your favorite cause is as easy as instant messaging. You IM, we give. [Learn more.](#)

## testimony

---

**From:** Pauahi Hookano [pauahi.hookano@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 19, 2008 7:06 PM  
**To:** testimony  
**Subject:** re:sb 2915

in strong support of sb 2915

1. This initiative has the support of taro farmers, agencies and research institutions; it is a result of the dialogues started under SCR206.
2. It will provide needed guidance for non-gmo alternatives to taro issues and actively support priorities set by the task force.
3. It will provide long-overdue support to one of the most important and complete traditional Hawaiian taro cultivar collections in the state; the collective updating of Bulletin 84; and to gathering information for task force for decision-making.
4. Funding is also necessary to provide for someone to coordinate and record the task force's efforts and so that taro farmers can afford to be at the table.
5. Funding needs to be allocated IN THIS YEAR so that the dialogue and actions begun in Oct 2006 can continue without interruption!

--

Intellectual slavery masquerading as sophistication is the worst form of slavery. --Ngugi  
Wa Thiongo

aloha,  
Pauahi

Personal Testimony Presented  
before the  
Senate Committee on Ways and Means  
February 21, 2008  
9:30 a.m.  
by  
Dr. Andrew G. Hashimoto

**SB 2915, SD1, Relating to Taro**

Chair Baker, Vice Chair Tsutsui, 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, SD1, 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, SD1.

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:** Na Maka o ka 'Aina [namaka@interpac.net]

**Sent:** Wednesday, February 20, 2008 11:10 AM

**To:** testimony

**Subject:** Senate Ways and Means Committee - SB2915 - THURSDAY, 21 FEBRUARY 2008, 9AM

**Senate Ways and Means Committee - SB2915 - THURSDAY, 21 FEBRUARY 2008, 9AM**

**Please pass SB2915!**

**Over the past 25 years we have videotaped kalo growers on all islands, producing several documentaries that are now used in classrooms throughout Hawai'i to teach students about the importance of kalo.**

**From Hanalei to Puna, we have seen the extraordinary efforts that kalo farmers have made to continue their way of life and provide the Hawaiian community with kalo and poi, despite challenges such as low stream flow, the diseases that come from low stream flow, and the general loss of and alienation from traditional growing lands.**

**However, we know that Hawai'i can grow enough for each and every one of us that needs and wants to eat kalo; just a brief look at fairly recent history shows how many pounds of taro were once produced here.**

**This scenario can be brought back to reality, but only by a concerted effort on the part of the whole community. You as legislators must help lead this effort by allocating resources.**

**I want my tax dollars to go toward the formation of a task force to concentrate effort on promoting the growing of kalo, and studying ways for more successful planting and harvesting.**

**Kalo will help us survive any devastating event that may cut off our imported food supplies.**

**Please pass SB2915 this year. We cannot wait.**

**Mahalo.**

**~Joan Lander**

**PO Box 29**

**Na'alehu, Hawai'i 96772**

Hawaii  
Crop  
Improvement  
Association

Sarah Styan, President  
P.O. Box 609  
Waimea, Hawaii 96796  
Phone: 808- 338-8300 ext 113

---

Testimony by: Sarah Styan  
SB 2915sd1, Taro  
Senate WAM Committee  
Thursday, Feb. 21, 2008  
Room 211: 9:30 am

Position: Support

Chair Baker and Members of the Senate WAM Committee:

My name is Sarah Styan. I am a Kauai resident, President of HCIA and research scientist of Pioneer Hi-Bred International, Waimea Research Station. 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 this and other taro measures introduced this year. While HCIA member companies do not grow taro, nor do we plan to grow taro, we have and continue to support the preservation and protection of taro in Hawaii. As testified in other sessions, HCIA respects the cultural significance of taro, and supports the Hawaiian community's discussion of research and development for taro.

We offer our support of SB 2915sd1, which provides funding to support the continuation of the Department of Agriculture discussion under the auspices of SCR 206, as well as the specific appropriations listed to assist in the revision of Bulletin 84, Taro Varieties in Hawaii (1939), and for the protection of the Molokai taro varieties collection.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony.

**Written Testimony Presented Before the  
Senate Committee on Ways and Means**

February 21, 2008 at 9:30 a.m.

by

Dr. Gary K. Ostrander  
Vice Chancellor for Research and Graduate Education &  
Interim Dean for the John A. Burns School of Medicine  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

**SB 2915 SD1 Relating to Taro**

Chair Baker, Vice Chair Tsutsui, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of SB 2915 SD1.

In October 2007, SCR 206 afforded a representative cross section of the community to come together to discuss the critical problems facing taro production in Hawai'i today. The stakeholders present that day successfully began a dialogue addressing problems and potential solutions for issues ranging from importation regulations to invasive species.

I am here to voice our support for the continuation of that dialogue.

SB 2915 SD1 establishes a much needed task force dedicated to finding cooperative solutions for the protection of taro. This bill is critical because it requires all stakeholder groups to work together. We believe that only through a commitment of cooperation and community engagement will any protection or security program truly be successful. Therefore, I eagerly urge you to support this bill as is with the requested appropriations.

LINDA LINGLE  
Governor



SANDRA LEE KUNIMOTO  
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

DUANE K. OKAMOTO  
Deputy to the Chairperson

State of Hawaii  
**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**  
1428 South King Street  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96814-2512

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

**BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS  
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2008  
9:30 A.M.**

**SENATE BILL NO. 2915, S.D.1  
RELATING TO TARO**

Chairperson Baker and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill No. 2915, S.D. 1, 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 supports the intent of this bill; however, we have concerns about the possible adverse budgetary impact that this bill may have on the Executive Supplemental Budget request.

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.

Taro remains critically vulnerable to attack from uninspected foreign taro. Once fully implemented, the biosecurity program will increase protection for taro through the establishment of a more comprehensive prevention system. The biosecurity program also promotes the expansion of agriculture, including taro, so that less foreign taro is imported.

The key to the protection of taro is finding solutions through the promotion of active dialogue through all concerned sectors and the community for which we serve.



**SB2915, SD 1, RELATING TO TARO**  
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

February 21, 2008  
Room: 211

9:30 a.m.

---

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS** S.B. 2915, S.D. 1, **with amendments**. The bill 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 requests that an amendment be added to the bill that states that the Taro Security and Purity Task Force be housed within OHA for administrative purposes, on the condition that OHA also receives the state appropriation to oversee the task force and fund its various duties. Taro farmers had originally broached this amendment, and OHA supports this effort as we feel it is our responsibility to help ensure that this important process is successful.

OHA urges the Committee to PASS S.B. 2915, S.D. 1, taking the above considerations into account. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.





# **KAUA'I TARO GROWERS ASSOCIATION**

**Testimony of Rodney Haraguchi  
President  
Kauai Taro Growers Association**

**Committee on Ways and Means  
Senator Rosalyn H. Baker, Chair  
Senator Shan S. Tsutsui, Vice Chair**

**Thursday, February 21, 2008  
9:30AM Conference Room 211**

**Support of Senate Bill 2915 SD1  
Relating to Taro**

**Senator Rosalyn Baker, Chair and Senator Shan Tsutsui Vice Chair:**

On behalf of the members of the Kauai Taro Growers Association, mahalo for the opportunity to voice our support for SB2915 SD1. As a participant at the Taro Security and Purity conference this past October, it was heartwarming for taro farmers to see the support that was being given to our industry which is declining rapidly.

According to the 2006 USDA Hawaii Taro statistics, Kauai taro farmers provide 75% of the state processed taro supply. The amount of farms statewide has declined from 190 in 1999 to 105 in 2006 and even less now in 2008. The cultural significance of taro to Hawaii and its people is of utmost importance to the Sustainability 2050 plan. Without sustainability for the taro farmers to pass their farms to the next generation, there will continue to have a decline in the number of farms and acreages. This task force will address the many issues facing taro farmers and provide direction and guidance to the many agencies that may be able to make a difference.

This bill provides funding for this task force and for other important needs of taro such as protecting the many taro varieties that has survived. There are also collections on Kauai where some of the Molokai varieties came from and on the Big Island. This task force will be able to address the critical needs of taro throughout the entire state.

And most important, taro needs tremendous amount of water to survive and taro farmers throughout the state need repairs to their irrigations systems and find solutions for diseases and the apple snail pests. This task force should also address these issues so that there's a comprehensive plan to help the industry survive. The first step is to prevent additional pests or diseases from entering the state through the biosecurity program with Department of Agriculture and this task force. Having the support from OHA will also provide the cultural direction and the assistance that may be needed to make an impact and to be proactive and implement the plans.

We humbly ask for your support and passing of this bill. In the future, people will look back and say, this is the bill that turned the industry around as they gaze over the verdant landscapes of taro throughout the islands.

**testimony**

---

**From:** jim cain [kinglaulau@hotmail.com]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 20, 2008 5:28 PM  
**To:** testimony  
**Subject:** sb2915 WAM

Chair Rosalyn Baker  
 Vice-Chair Shan Tsutsui  
 2/20/08

Aloha, my name is Jim Cain, my family and I are full-time taro farmers and poi processors from Waipi'o Valley, island of Hawai'i. I am writing this testimony in support of sb2915 that establishes a taro security and purity task force. This bill grew out of last year's SCR206 that directed DOA to establish a "taro security and purity program". After much discussion between DOA, CTAHR, OHA, Farm Bureau, legislators, and taro farmers from around the state, it was unanimously agreed that it would be of great benefit to establish a continued dialogue. It was also agreed that funding would be necessary to carry out the work of the task force. From my view point as a taro farmer, it is imperative that we establish a process that is farmer driven if we are to make the most effective use of the time and money that will be expended. It is with this in mind that I would like to offer the following amendments to sb2915:

Section 2. delete DOA and insert OHA. (Any discussion of taro and poi should be from a Hawaiian perspective. Also, with the task force housed in OHA, it would make it more likely to receive matching funds to help implement the priorities of the task force.)

Section 3. (5) Onipa'a Na Hui Kalo ( Onipa'a is a state wide organization of taro farmers, poi processors, educators, cultural practioners, young and old, that has a proven 10 year track record of projects that have been focused on supporting the growing of taro. There has been collaboration with state and federal agencies, schools, non-profits, and many other interested parties. It is the only state wide organization that focuses on Kalo. Their inclusion in this task force would be very beneficial.)

Taro farmers shall be eligible for a stipend for their participation. (Taro farmers should be compensated for their time and knowledge that they lend to this effort. All agency people participating are compensated.)

Section 8. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawai'i the sum of \$650,000 or so much thereof as many be necessary for fiscal year 2008-2009 to be allotted as follows:

- (1) \$375,000 for the convening of the task force, retaining the minimum of at least one person to facilitate and coordinate the task force, preparing and presenting the final report to the legislature, and for implementing the priorities of the task force.
- (2) \$150,000 for archival and ethnographical research of the history of taro and taro practises in Hawai'i, and the traditional Hawaiian cultivars to aid in its revival and to revise Bulletin 84: Taro Varieties in Hawai'i (1939) which is the key reference for taro growers and researchers.
- (3) \$125,000 for protection and dessimation of the Moloka'i taro varieties collection, the oldest and most complete collection and source of taro varieties in Hawai'i.

The sum appropriated shall be expended by the Office of Hawaiian Affairs for the purpose of this Act.

(The changes suggested for Section 8 would give much needed flexibility in implementing projects developed by the task force. Instead of just meeting, we would be able to help out taro farmers with some of the challenges they face and take concrete steps to ensure a continuous supply of poi for the families of Hawai'i.) On behalf of all the taro farming families of Waipi'o Valley, I would like to say Mahalo for your time and support. If there are any questions, I can be reached at 775-9001, or [kinglaulau@hotmail.com](mailto:kinglaulau@hotmail.com) .

---

Shed those extra pounds with MSN and The Biggest Loser! [Learn more.](#)