

TO: Senatero Rosalyn Baker, Chair
Senate Ways and Means Committee

FROM: Penny Levin

DATE: Thursday, February 21, 2008
(Submitted by email)

Aloha honorable Chair and Committee members;

I am testifying, as an individual and a taro farmer from Maui, in strong support of SB2915 which requests the establishment and funding of a taro security and purity task force. I am also a member of 'Onipa'a Nā Hui Kalo, a statewide organization of taro farmers.

There have been decades of research and decision-making by agencies and institutions without taro farmers. We've been considered "cooperators" rather than "collaborators" or "partners." This task force represents the first time that all the agencies and institutions involved in taro research and crop security are willingly at the table with us.

The collective message from the SCR206 dialogue last year was – let this continue, and let it be funded so that taro farmers can afford to participate and real action, based on agreed upon priorities can occur.

Taro farmers also said; let us be the voice that leads so that research and action will stem from the lo'i and not from the clouds; not out of touch with the realities of taro farmers' lives and conditions.

There are a number of amendments from taro farmers which were adopted by the Senate Agriculture and Hawaiian Affairs Committee, which failed to make it into SB2915 SD1 in time to be posted on the weblink. In order to ensure that these amendments are complete, I attach those portions of the bill with changes herein.

Each portion of work outlined in the task force bill is a critical piece of a whole. They will provide all participants in this ongoing dialogue with the needed guidance for non-gmo alternatives to taro issues and actively support priorities set by the task force. The bill will also provide long-overdue support to one of the most important and complete traditional Hawaiian taro cultivar collections in the state (which has gone unfunded for more than two decades); the collective updating of Bulletin 84 (which has gone unfunded since the need was first expressed for at least 14 years); and to gathering information for task force for decision-making.

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. It needs to be allocated IN THIS YEAR so that the dialogue and positive actions begun in Oct 2007 and described in the taro farmers' SCR206 Report to the Legislature can continue without interruption.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify.

Penny Levin

Report Title:

Taro Security and Purity Task Force; Appropriation

Description:

Creating the taro security and purity task force and appropriating funds for that purpose. (SD1)

THE SENATE
TWENTY-FOURTH LEGISLATURE,
2008
STATE OF HAWAII

S.B. NO. 2915
S.D. 1

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO TARO..

[amendments per taro farmers' recommendations; as follows]

SECTION 2. There is established the taro security and purity task force. For administrative purposes the taro security and purity task force shall be placed within the ~~department of agriculture.~~ Office of Hawaiian Affairs.

SECTION 3. The taro security and purity task force shall consist of the following members or their representatives:

- (1) The department of agriculture;
- (2) The office of Hawaiian affairs;
- (3) The University of Hawai'i; and
- (4) The Hawai'i Farm Bureau Federation;
- (5) 'Onipa'a Nā Hui Kalo;

The taro security and purity task force shall ...

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 may be necessary for fiscal year 2008-2009 to be allotted as follows:

(1) ~~\$250,000~~ \$375,000 for the convening and implementation of the taro security and purity task force; including the conducting of dialogues and the implementation of task force priorities on all islands; for retaining the minimum of at least one person to facilitate, coordinate, communicate, and record the work of the taro security and purity task force; and for preparing the final report to be submitted to the legislature.

~~(2) \$100,000 for retaining the minimum of at least one person to facilitate, coordinate, communicate, and record the work of the taro security and purity task force;~~

~~(3)~~ (2) \$150,000 for archival and ethnographic research of the history of taro and taro practices 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; and

~~(4)~~ (3) \$125,000 for protection of the Moloka'i taro varieties collection, the oldest and most complete collection and source of taro varieties in Hawai'i, and.

~~(5)~~ ~~\$25,000 for preparing the final report to be submitted to the legislature.~~

The sum appropriated shall be expended by the ~~department of agriculture~~ Office of Hawaiian Affairs for the purposes of this Act.

SECTION 9. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2008.

To: Senate Ways and Means Committee
Senator Rosalyn Baker, Chair
Senator Shan Tsutsui, Vice Chair

From: Chris Kobayashi
Wai`oli Farm

Thursday, February 21, 2008, 9:30 am, Room 211

Testimony in Support of SB 2915

Chair Baker, Vice Chair Tsutsui, and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 2915, the Taro Security and Purity Task Force bill.

In October 2007, farmers met with CTAHR, Farm Bureau, OHA and DOA and had meaningful dialogue on taro as a result of SCR 206. It was agreed by many in attendance that this discussion needed to continue and that farmers should have an equal place at the table, for who would understand their crop better than the farmers themselves.

I ask that you support this bill so that we all can work together to make sure that taro, a culturally and economically important crop will continue to flourish in our Hawaiian islands. We need to continue the dialog this year.

Mahalo.

Chris Kobayashi
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