

Testimony

House Committee on Water, Land and Ocean Resources and Committee on Agriculture

Re: HB 241 RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Chair Ito, Chair Tsuji and Members of the Committees:

Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation, on behalf of its' member farmers and ranchers is in **strong support of HB241** authorizing the Soil and Water Conservation districts to retain their revenues generated by the districts at the end of the year.

The U.S. Soil and Water Conservation Act of 1935 provided the legal basis for states to form local soil and water conservation districts and enable local communities to take positive action to collectively protect our nation's soil and water resources. The Soil and Water Conservation Districts provide an excellent model of private and public partnerships that operate for the public good. During this time of fiscal difficulties, the SWCDs truly exemplify the opportunities of united efforts between government and the private sector in accomplishing a mutual goal. These organizations are supported not only from the State but also by Counties as well as grants that they obtain on their own initiative. The benefits they bring by ensuring that Conservation Plans are appropriate for the lands help protect communities from flood damages and other disasters. The loss of their services would cost the State far in excess of any monies remaining in their funds at the end of the fiscal year. The members of the Districts are volunteers and often contribute monies out of their personal funds to meet the needs of the organization.

HFBF respectfully requests your strong support of this measure as a vote of confidence and commendation to the SWCD for their efforts. Thank you for this opportunity to provide our opinion on this matter.