



Hawaii Farm Bureau
F E D E R A T I O N

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TESTIMONY

LATE TESTIMONY

RE: HB2421 HD1 RELATING TO GOVERNMENT

Chair Oshiro and Members of the Committees:

Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation, the State's largest general agriculture advocacy organization **is in strong support of HB HD1 2421** which modifies the Environmental Revolving Fund to provide for long term Energy and Food Security.

Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation agrees with the intent of the measure to identify a stable funding source to provide for long term energy and food security in the State. Today, as everyone faces economic hardships, the balance between cutting costs and providing for the future is critical. Agriculture is just at that tipping point. Our farmers and ranchers are undergoing severe hardships not only due to economic challenges but from other fronts including weather, either droughts or flooding. Many of our larger farmers ...those who make a difference in Hawaii's self sufficiency have quietly faded away as they lost their life savings or are unable to pay loans due to increased costs of production. Energy costs play a significant role in their plight – and not just through direct fuel costs to run their tractors but due to their inputs(fertilizers, drip tubing, crop protection chemicals, tractor tires, etc.) that are fossil fuel based, or their utility bills to process or chill their products.

Combining Energy and Food Security into a comprehensive plan has merits. As renewable energy facilities are considered, many of the lands on which they could be sited are on agricultural lands. It is a no-brainer that the most productive agricultural lands ..flat terrain, easy access to infrastructure, and good sunlight in the case of solar are the same lands that make it most attractive for energy development. To meet Hawaii's long term food and energy security needs, it will be critical that there be a balance between agriculture and energy production. As energy prices have skyrocketed, there is a rush to provide for long term energy self sufficiency. Last year, when there was a tomato contamination issue, every buyer became Hawaii's tomato farmer's best friend. One week later, as the scare subsided and mainland tomatoes were deemed safe, the buyers no long recognized the existence of the local farmer. The same happens during a strike or catastrophic events. Just as renewable energy facilities cannot be constructed overnight, fields of produce or stockyards of cattle cannot happen when the need suddenly appears. It must be nurtured and cultivated everyday. Agriculture has the potential to not only provide for self sufficiency but bring new monies into Hawaii with export of unique items that may be in demand on the mainland or in foreign destinations. This new money into Hawaii is important to expand Hawaii's financial needs to provide for services for everyone. Providing for self sufficiency alone does not provide for our long term sustainability.

We agree with the concept of working with Economic Development Boards and strongly urge continued discussion on a Comprehensive Food and Energy Security program. Farm Bureau looks forward to participating in the discussions. It is important that all ramifications to all sectors of society is understood as we move forward with this measure.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments on this matter.