

**HB 2503,
HD1, SD1
Testimony**

LINDA LINGLE
Governor



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Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

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WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF SANDRA LEE KUNIMOTO
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 24, 2010
9:30 A.M.
CONFERENCE ROOM 211

HOUSE BILL NO. 2503, HD1, SD1
RELATING TO THE ENVIRONMENT

Chairperson Mercado Kim and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill No. 2503, HD1, SD1, which is an Administration proposal. The purpose of this bill is to authorize expansion of the permissible uses of the Pesticides Use Revolving Fund to include personnel costs for compliance monitoring. The Hawaii Department of Agriculture (HDOA) strongly supports this measure but recommends that the sunset date be deleted.

Compliance monitoring surveillance is an integral part of ensuring protection of the public and the environment. Conducting actual use inspections of agricultural and non-agricultural entities is the most important component of compliance monitoring; detecting violations before they occur rather than responding to post-use complaints. Compliance monitoring also includes inspections in the marketplace, at pesticide distributors, and at the ports of entry.

Management of the Pesticides Program is challenging with the absence of a Branch Manager. While the Plant Industry Administrator has temporarily assumed the

responsibility of acting Branch Manager in addition to his administration duties, more active and direct oversight is essential in assuring that the program continues in the right direction to provide services to protect the public and the environment.

The ability to fund compliance monitoring personnel including the Branch Manager through the Pesticides Use Revolving Fund will provide the Department with the flexibility to maintain services necessary to provide adequate monitoring in this important area. However, inclusion of a sunset date will result in only short term funding for such a critical position making it difficult to fill as there is no assurance that General Funds will be provided when the provision sunsets.

kim2 - Jo Ann

From: Jamie Story [jamie@grassrootinstitute.org]
Sent: Tuesday, March 23, 2010 8:33 AM
To: WAM Testimony
Subject: testimony to Senate WAM committee to oppose HOUSE BILL 1985 for 9:30 a.m. hearing Tuesday

Please deliver by Tuesday, March 23, 9:30AM, to Senate Ways & Means Committee, room 210.

March 23, 2010

Dear Chair Kim and members of the Senate Ways & Means,

I am writing on behalf of the Grassroot Institute of Hawaii to **oppose any additional increases in taxes and fees** as proposed in **House Bill 1985, SD1**. The Grassroot Institute is a non-profit, non-partisan research institute founded on the principles of individual liberty, free enterprise, and limited, accountable government. We represent hundreds of individual contributors and thousands of readers from across the state.

Hawaii is already one of the highest taxed states in the country, and HB1985 would serve to further increase the tax and fee burden placed on Hawaii's families and businesses. Furthermore, these measures would serve to decrease disposable income and lower sales in a time when Hawaii's businesses are struggling more than ever to survive. Below are just a few of our concerns:

- 1) *Increasing the cigarette tax:* Hawaii already has one of the highest taxes on tobacco products in the nation. The Grassroot Institute opposes further tax increases on cigarettes for several reasons. While tobacco use does carry health risks, the public is well informed about these risks, and government should not be in the business of punishing individuals for exercising freedom in making personal choices that do not harm others. Furthermore, tobacco use is highest among low-income groups, which makes these increases very painful to the poor. In addition, this hike would encourage lawlessness through black market sales, as the costs of complying with the tax may begin to outweigh the perceived risks of skirting it for many individuals.
- 2) *Increasing various state fees:* HB1985 would **double** nearly 20 fees paid by businesses and individuals to the State of Hawaii. These fees range from \$30 (would-be \$60) for continuing education course certificates paid by individuals trying to further their education, to \$1,000 (now \$2,000) for the limited line motor vehicle rental company producer's license. The state shouldn't nickel and dime during a time when families and businesses are making every penny count.
- 3) *Increasing insurance company fees:* While insurance providers may be able to absorb some of the fee increase, some portion will inevitably be passed along to the consumer. Elected officials should not discourage the purchase of insurance by helping to drive insurance premiums higher.

As written, HB 1985 would further harm Hawaii's economy by shrinking disposable income during a time when families and businesses already find it difficult to make ends meet. The Grassroot Institute believes that state government has grown beyond the ability of Hawaii taxpayers to pay for it. Instead of further raising taxes, lawmakers should look for ways to cut government services and spending. At your request, we are happy to discuss the millions of dollars of government waste and cost-cutting opportunities that we have identified through our research.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jamie Story, President
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