



SUPPORT
WITH COMMENTS

HB 2673
RELATING TO TARO
House Committee on Hawaiian Affairs

February 3, 2010
Room: 329

10:15a.m.

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS THE INTENT** of House Bill 2673, which extends the final report deadline for the taro security and purity task force for two years.

OHA worked closely with the Taro Security and Purity Task Force this past year as they made their way across the island chain to explore the challenges and successes facing the kalo farming community. The group already produced a comprehensive Final Report that contained recommendations that addressed numerous community concerns. The group also strengthened bonds within the taro growing community and improved relationships between taro growers and various governmental agencies and educational institutions. Therefore, the unfunded mandate of the Act 211, Session Laws of Hawai'i 2008, has been fulfilled. The group created a solid foundation, and more work needs to be done.

Thus, we ask that H.B. 2673 be amended to remove the language in Section 2 that states: "provided that no funds shall be expended unless matched on a dollar for dollar basis by the office of Hawaiian affairs." We note that the same language was contained in the later iterations of Senate Bill 2915, which eventually became Act 211. When Governor Linda Lingle signed Act 211 into law, she vetoed the state's appropriation for the task force, leaving the Act as an unfunded mandate for OHA to be the sole financier, as well as the administrator, of the task force. OHA expended \$83,654.46 on task force activities, including covering the cost of a contracted facilitator, meeting space, food and travel expenses for 18 members to attend 21 meetings on seven islands. In addition, OHA dedicated the equivalent of two full-time staff positions to the administration of the task force.

While OHA fully supports the task force, we believe that we have gone above and beyond what was required of OHA from Act 211, completely covering the cost of the task force when the state understandably, given the current economic climate, could not pay its share. While we appreciate the state's financial difficulties, OHA too faces similar economic challenges.

Kalo is central to Hawaiian culture, and we fully embrace our kuleana to this sacred plant. However, kalo was also recently designated as the official plant of the state by the Legislature in recognition of the plant's importance to the cultural heritage and identity of Hawai'i. We ask that the state also embrace its kuleana to kalo and help fund the critical work of the Taro Security and Purity Task Force, if its lifespan is extended.

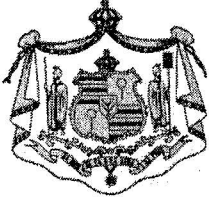
Moreover, we ask for some clarification with regard to H.B. 2673. The current version of the bill is not clear on what is the expected result of the proposed extension of the task force. Again, the mandate of the task force through Act 211 has been fulfilled. The group developed and submitted to the Legislature a Preliminary Report (December 31, 2008) and a 108-page Final Report (December 29, 2009), as required by Act 211. H.B. 2673 just extends the deadline of the Final Report to 2012. Is the expectation of H.B. 2673 to make the task force travel around the state and complete another Final Report? We believe that this is redundant and not the most prudent way to expend increasingly limited funds, especially given the state's and OHA's financial situations.

We note that our two carry-over bills, H.B. 904 and S.B. 998, suffer from similar problems. We believe that the mandates of Act 211 have been completed. Therefore any proposed extension to the task force cannot simply be made by extending Act 211's deadline. An extension of the task force must outline clear objectives that have not already been fulfilled. There is more work to be done, but we do not believe that H.B. 2673 properly directs the task force to do that work.

Our preferred method of continuing our relationship with the task force would be through our grants process. If the Legislature requires OHA to fund the task force, we would have to take money already appropriated from our budget for other projects and redirect that funding to the

task force. This would leave other critical projects underfunded. This sort of shuffling of our budget occurred after the passage of Act 211. Our grants process allows our Board to provide the task force with funding that is already earmarked to be released to the community, thereby avoiding taking money from other projects. This is why we have encouraged the task force to partner with a non-profit group and apply for an OHA grant.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs
P. O. Box 1135
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96807

SUPPORT

January 31, 2010

**TESTIMONY OF LEIMOMI KHAN, PRESIDENT
IN SUPPORT OF
H. B. 2673, RELATING TO TARO**

**Hearing date and time: Wednesday, February 3, 2010, 10:15 a.m.
Committee on Hawaiian Affairs**

Aloha Representative Carroll, Chair, and members of the Committee on Hawaiian Affairs

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of H.B. 2673, which seeks to extend the final report deadline for the taro security and purity task force for two years, and to appropriate state funding with a dollar for dollar match requirement by the Office of Hawaiian Affairs.

In 2008, the Hawai'i State Legislature passed Act 211, an enabling legislation which established the Taro Security and Purity Task Force. Legislators and the community recognized the many challenges facing taro, taro farmers and taro markets, and by establishing the Task Force gave opportunity for the voices of those who know most about these issues, the taro farmers. The Task Force has also strengthened and balanced the necessary relationships among all stakeholders, and in particular, with the University of Hawaii.

The Hawai'i State legislature, in recent years, has recognized the importance of building infrastructure and support for local businesses as a component needed to build the state's economy. Regarding taro, in 2007, 1.8 million pounds of taro were imported to Hawaii. Thus, here is an opportunity for the state to enable more jobs, to support Taro Farmers, and to grow a staple responsive to the needs of the people of Hawai'i. Taro is and can be again in Hawai'i...from cultural legacy and ancestor to vibrant economic and food crop self-sufficiency.

The Task Force has issued their preliminary report which contains 87 recommendations. However, they were unable to initiate several active projects because of the lack of funding by the state (the governor redlined the funding as unnecessary). We appreciate the funding that the Office of Hawaiian Affairs did provide to the Task Force that has allowed them to do some of the work envisioned by the Legislature. Extending the Task Force for an additional two years will enable them to continue the work necessary and to implement those recommendations contained in the preliminary report.

We applaud the outstanding work of the Taro Task Force and seek your support to honor their request to extend the Taro Task Force for an additional two years. It's the right and respectful thing to do. It is good for the State of Hawai'i and for the Taro, in the Hawaiian culture, the divine ancestor of man.

About the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs

The Association is a growing national confederation of fifty-eight Hawaiian Civic Clubs, located throughout the State of Hawai'i and in the States of Alaska, California, Colorado, Illinois, Nevada, Utah, Virginia, Washington State, Tennessee, and Texas. It initiates and works to support actions that enhance the civic, economic, educational, health and social welfare of our communities, and in particular, the culture and welfare of the Native Hawaiian community.

SUPPORT

Aloha Chair Carroll and committee members,

I am writing in full support of hb2673, and on behalf of taro growers and the taro community around the state, wish to extend a warm mahalo for your support as we seek to increase the production of taro. As you know, the Taro Security and Purity Task Force, with the support and funding of OHA, spent the last year visiting taro growing communities around the state, seeking input on how we can work together to both support long time growers and provide opportunities for those who wish to grow taro. Together, with input from many stakeholders, we have forged and strengthened many relationships and put together a comprehensive overview of the steps necessary to move forward in our quest to increase the supply of taro for Hawai'i. Waipi'o kupuna Uncle Ted Kaaekuahiwi said it best, "To grow taro, you need land, water and people." It is important to understand that all of the facets involved in the process of growing taro are inter-dependent of each other, and each component must be healthy in order for the farmer to be successful.

SB2915, the original legislation put forth by the taro farmers, and passed by the 2008 legislature, contained funding in the amount of \$325,000 to be matched by OHA. Due to a line-item veto by the Governor, the Task Force proceeded with funding provided by OHA and accomplished the first step in supporting the taro community. We observed traditional protocol, we took the time to kahea, we introduced ourselves to the community, we stated our intentions, and we listened. In doing so we have gained trust and there is an atmosphere of hope. The task force report is a complete and holistic view that comes from the taro community, and outlines the steps necessary to make sure it thrives. There is a lifetime of work contained in the pages of the report, and it is vital that we now translate the many solid recommendations on policy and programs into action. There are many who are dedicated to seeing this through, and we look forward to working with OHA on implementing the plan.

It is important that the State of Hawai'i show commitment to this process as well. In this time of economic distress, resources are limited. Balancing the state budget is utmost on your minds. But we must also recognize the importance of creating jobs for both the short and long time, and in this unprecedented economic crisis lies the opportunity to diversify our economy. Local food production is a huge untapped area of potential economic growth. I urge you to let those of us who are motivated help shoulder this heavy load. Match our commitment to this process. We must be creative as we seek for the resources that are necessary to move forward, and we will continue to explore the many options that are available, as well as exploring the partnerships that can lead to success. I am confident, that if we all work together, we will ensure that taro will remain a solid foundation for Hawai'i's agriculture. In closing, I would again like to send a warm mahalo for your unwavering support.

Me ke

aloha,

Security and Purity Task Force

Jim Cain, Chair, Taro



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

2343 Rose Street, Honolulu, HI 96819

Phone: (808) 848-2074; Neighbor Islands: 1-800-482-1272

Fax: (808) 848-1921; e-mail: info@hfbf.org

TESTIMONY

OPPOSED

RE: HB2673: RELATING TO TARO

Chair Carroll and Members of the Committee:

Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation, on behalf of our member farm and ranch families and organizations opposes HB2673 seeking to extend the deadline for the final report for the taro security and purity task force an additional 2 years.

HFBB supported the original passage of this measure to identify non-GMO means to ensure long term viability of taro culture in the islands. Our commercial farmers initially participated in the meetings but grew increasingly frustrated as their needs were not addressed. There has been criticism about their sporadic participation but it stems from this frustration.

We do not object having the task force continue solely under OHA funding however, we do not believe a State match during these difficult budgetary times can be justified.

We strongly support and will work towards a viable commercial taro industry. However, the implementation actions must be pragmatic. Continuation of customary and traditional practices should also occur but in cases, they are different from commercial operations. We believe the task force did not adequately differentiate the needs of these two practices.

We therefore, respectfully request that this measure be held. We apologize for not being here, however, our farmers are busy in the field and staff is at an Agricultural Committee hearing being held at this same time.

Attached is the HFBB letter that was submitted to OHA regarding the final report. Thank you.