



# **UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM**

## **Legislative Testimony**

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Testimony Presented Before the  
House Committee on Agriculture  
February 3, 2010 at 8:30am

by

James R. Gaines

Vice President for Research, University of Hawai'i

HB 2775 – Relating to Agriculture

Chair Tsuji, Vice Chair Wooley and Members of the House Agriculture Committee:

HB 2775 establishes fees for the processing of permits and other requests for the importation or possession of incoming plants, animals, and microorganisms into the State.

The University of Hawai'i supports the intent of the bill and is willing to pay a reasonable fee only if it leads to faster processing and issuance of importation permits.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



**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](mailto:info@hfbf.org)

## **TESTIMONY**

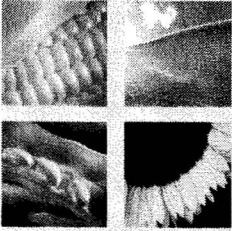
### **HB 2775 RELATING TO AGRICULTURE**

Chair Tsuji and Members of the Committee:

Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation on behalf of our farmer and ranch families and organizations support HB 2775, establishing fees for regulatory activities associated with importation of plants, animals and microorganisms.

The industry has recognized the dire state of the State Budget. We believe that an evolution to a true fee for services structure will help ensure protection of public interests while continuing business in a timely manner. This measure provides a means to move in this direction.

HFBF strongly requests your support of this measure along with timely passage of rules and regulations so the measure can be implemented as soon as possible. If there are any questions, please contact Luella Costales at 848 2074. Thank you



# Hawaii Crop Improvement Association

*Growing the Future of Worldwide Agriculture in Hawaii*

Testimony By: Alicia Maluafiti  
HB 2775, Relating to Agriculture  
The House Committee on Agriculture  
Wednesday, February 3, 2010  
Room 312, 8:30 am

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**Position: Support with amendments**

Aloha Chair Tsuji, Vice Chair Wooley and members of the Committee:

My name is Alicia Maluafiti, Executive Director of the Hawaii Crop Improvement Association. HCIA is a nonprofit trade association representing the agricultural seed industry in Hawaii. Now the state's largest agricultural commodity, the seed industry contributes to the economic health and diversity of the islands by providing high quality jobs in rural communities, keeping important agricultural lands in agricultural use, and serving as responsible stewards of Hawaii's natural resources.

HCIA fully recognize the dire straits of the economic crisis and its impact on the Hawaii Department of Agriculture. We have already seen a number of bills before the legislature that attempt to minimize the unintended consequences of the furloughs and reduction in force on the agricultural industry, including the seed companies. We further understand the need of the DOA to increase – at least temporarily – their fees to ensure that they are able to effectively achieve their mission.

**Although we support the need to visit all possible solutions such as fee increases, we believe it would be responsible to consider amending HB 2775 – and other bills - to include a sunset date.** If and when we begin to see a recovery in our state's economy, the legislature and the Department should revisit and justify the current fee level, and adjust those fees as necessary.

Mahalo for the opportunity to comment.

Testimony of The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i  
Supporting H.B. 2775 Relating to Agriculture  
House Committee on Agriculture  
Wednesday, February 3, 2010, 8:30am, Rm. 312

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*The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i is a private non-profit conservation organization dedicated to the preservation of Hawaii's native plants, animals, and ecosystems. The Conservancy has helped to protect nearly 200,000 acres of natural lands for native species in Hawai'i. Today, we actively manage more than 32,000 acres in 11 nature preserves on O'ahu, Maui, Hawai'i, Moloka'i, Lāna'i, and Kaua'i. We also work closely with government agencies, private parties and communities on cooperative land and marine management projects.*

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The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i supports H.B. 2775 Relating to Agriculture, and the establishment of a reasonable fee structure for issuing permits for imports of plants, animals and microorganisms to help support improved inspection capacity and services at the Department of Agriculture (HDOA).

Invasive insects, diseases, snakes, weeds, and other pests are one of the greatest threats to Hawaii's economy, natural environment, and the health and lifestyle of its people.

The HDOA is responsible for the inspection and permitting of arriving cargo and interisland cargo shipments to protect the state from unwanted plant and animal pests and diseases. The Department developed a multi-faceted Biosecurity Plan to enhance its efforts with more inspectors, more efficient and effective inspection services, joint state-federal inspection facilities, and agreements with importers and producers for improved sanitary protocols before items are shipped to Hawai'i and between the islands. Past financial and personnel support provided by the Legislature has been essential to implementing this plan.

Unfortunately, the current budget conditions in the State have caused drastic—and potentially catastrophic—reductions in the Department's capability to review permit applications and to inspect cargo entering and moving between the islands:

- 28 of 50 general funded inspectors have been laid off across the State;
- At Honolulu International Airport (HNL), there are now only 6 inspectors where there used to be 19; and
- Insect interceptions by inspectors at HNL have dropped from about 150 per month down to about 10 per month.

The Department's inspection and permitting capacity has dropped so far below anything that can reasonably be expected to be effective that there is a good chance that we won't know what new pest has arrived and been distributed across the islands until there is an outbreak of some kind.

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The House of Representatives  
Committee on Agriculture  
Wednesday, February 3, 2010  
8:30 a.m., Conference Room 312  
State Capitol

Aloha Chair Tsuji, Vice Chair Wooley and Committee Members,  
**CGAPS supports the intent of HB 2775, *Relating to Agriculture***, but submits this letter to draw attention to the issue of plant importation. Specifically, the text HB 2775 (and companion bill SB 2855) states the following:

“To determine whether a **plant**, animal, or microorganism is safe or harmful, the department of agriculture evaluates applications based upon available information, the intended use, and the availability of adequate safeguards and protocols with respect to the plant animal or organism. The department also evaluates the reliability of the responsible individual and the risks and benefits associated with the particular introduction. The evaluation also requires a science-based risk assessment of scientific data with respect to the plant, animal, or organism in a thorough, consistent, and logical manner.”

The word “plant” is highlighted because plants that are not already on the State Noxious Weed List, Noxious Seed List or Restricted Plants List are permitted free entry, without importer application. Furthermore, there is no risk/benefit analysis is conducted for plants not on these lists. There are more than 250,000 species of plants in the world, and perhaps 10% of these would become invasive if imported into Hawai‘i. There is a Weed Risk Assessment system that is 90% accurate in identifying plants that will become invasive in Hawai‘i. However, it is currently a voluntary screening system not directly associated with the Hawai‘i Department of Agriculture. The Weed Risk Assessment technicians that do the work are funded via the Hawai‘i Invasive Species Council prevention funds. Some nurseries and other plant importers voluntarily submit names of plants that have already been imported for the free screening service, and non-binding results are provided, invasive or non-invasive. This system hardly protects Hawai‘i, but it has been better than nothing.

The financial burden of importing potentially harmful species should be on the importer, and HDOA should have some method of recouping the cost of evaluating proposed imports. Additionally, new plant imports should be treated just as judiciously as new animals and microorganisms. Thank you for your work and your consideration in this matter.  
Aloha,

Christy Martin, CGAPS PIO  
(808) 722-0995  
christym@rocketmail.com