

**TESTIMONY**  
**HB 2832 HD1**



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RELATING TO TARO SECURITY**

Senate Committee on Water, Land, Agriculture and Hawaiian Affairs

March 10, 2010

2:45 p.m.

Room: 229

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The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) expresses concern regarding HB2832 HD1, which directs OHA to seek available federal, state, county or private funding to restore kalo cultivation.

We ask that HB2832 HD1 be amended back to its original form, with the Department of Agriculture designated as the lead coordinator of this effort. With its relationship with the United States Department of Agriculture and other agricultural organizations, the DOA has a better understanding of the types of funding available for kalo restoration projects and is better suited to secure such monies.

We view DOA's lead role under the original version of HB2832 as an opportunity for the state to fulfill its solemn kuleana to kalo. Kalo is not only significant to Native Hawaiians, it is also critical to the cultural identity of the entire state. In recognition of this, the Legislature recently designated kalo as the official plant of the state.

OHA also notes that HB2832 HD1's proposed amendments to Chapter 10, Hawaii Revised Statutes, may be unnecessary as it does not authorize, empower or qualify the agency to do anything we could not otherwise do without the enactment of the bill.

To be sure, OHA embraces its kuleana to support the cultivation of kalo, the staple of the traditional Hawaiian diet and the sacred elder brother of the Hawaiian people. Over the past year, OHA administered the Taro Security and Purity Task Force, which was cited in the initial version of HB 2832, as the group traveled to taro-growing communities throughout the state collecting information for the findings and recommendations of its Final Report, which was submitted to the Legislature on December 29, 2009. The group has set a steady foundation for kalo security in Hawai'i. Our understanding is that this bill is

a vehicle to help continue the important work, dialogue and networking that occurred under the task force.

OHA supports the task force and understands its value to the preservation and perpetuation of kalo. We look forward to following DOA's lead in helping to ensure that kalo and kalo growers thrive once again in Hawai'i.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Aloha Chair Hee and committee members,

I am writing in full support of hb2832, 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 encourage and provide opportunities to a new generation of taro growers. 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 unanimously 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 limited funding provided by OHA and accomplished the first step in supporting the taro community. We observed traditional protocol, we took the time to kahea, to introduce ourselves and state 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 and all other stakeholders 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 foremost on your minds. But we must also recognize the importance of creating jobs for both the short and long term, and in this unprecedented economic crisis lay 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 search 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 work together, we will ensure that taro will remain a solid foundation for Hawai'i's agriculture.

There were several bills that we put forth this session whose aim is to help in our efforts to implement the task force report, we have been advised that in the

interest of time, only one bill would be heard. In order to strengthen this bill, and to ensure that our intent of effectively supporting the taro community and taro farmers is realized, I would like to offer the following amendments to hb2832:

1. Extend the life of the task force for five additional years.  
The Taro Security and Purity Task Force is set to sunset on June 30, 2010. While we have accomplished much in setting a road map to increased taro production, much remains to be done in respect to implementing the many programs that will help in this effort. Extending the life of the task force will ensure that this very powerful working group will remain together and focus our efforts to continue the process.
2. Direct DOA and DLNR to identify suitable taro growing lands held by the state and establish a program to make such lands available to taro growers.  
There is no shortage of lands suitable for growing taro, however access to these lands is limited. Getting people on land and making the lands productive will have a great economic benefit to the state.
3. Provide funding in the amount \$300,000 to be matched by similar funding by OHA.  
The funding will be used to establish a program within OHA to ensure that the many recommendations contained in the task force report will be carried out. The proposed funding will enable program development and implementation, as well as support the effort to search and apply for funding that will continue this process to support the taro growers. A programmatic approach to moving forward, in combination with continued involvement and leadership from the taro community will be the most effective route to ensure that the efforts put forth over the past year and a half will bear fruit. Currently the state of Hawai'i spends about 1% of its budget on agriculture. Combining this small amount of funding with the motivated efforts of the taro community, while seeking additional funding sources, results in increased benefits for the cost.

In closing, I would again like to extend a warm mahalo for your unwavering support.

Me ke aloha,

Jim Cain, Chair, Taro Security and

Purity Task Force

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**From:** Leslie Yee Hoy [lesyeehoy@yahoo.com]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 09, 2010 12:30 PM  
**To:** WTLTestimony  
**Cc:** Boyd Mossman; Colette Machado; Donald Cataluna; Haunani apoliona; John Waihee; Oz Stender; Robert Lindsey Jr; Rowena Akana; Walter Heen  
**Subject:** Full support of hb2832

Aloha Chair Hee and committee members:

My name is Leslie Yee Hoy and I farm kalo on kuleana land in Halawa valley on the island of Molokai. I'm also a Molokai representative on the Taro Security and Purity Task Force. During the past year and a half, with funding from OHA alone, I was honored to be a part of such a diverse, educated and talented group of people whose goal was to implement Act211. Mahalo nui OHA. We visited the main kalo growing communities on each island and held meetings that were well attended by kalo farmers of different races all with basically the same problems. The one thing that stood out the most for me, was the way each community came and embraced us. By the looks on their faces and the comments made, it was obvious they were glad that the task force was there to listen to their concerns. Relief and hope describes it best. I volunteered for this job thinking I could make a difference for all kalo farmers statewide. With the continued help of OHA and the state of Hawaii and all the pertinent agencies, I'm confident that the task force can make a difference. These kalo growing communities are looking at us to help them, lets not let them down.

Respectfully  
Leslie Yee Hoy

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