

**HB 2832,  
HD1, SD1  
Testimony**

Aloha Chair Kim and committee members,

I am writing in full support of hb2832hd1sd1, 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.

Me ke aloha, Jim Cain, Chair TSPTF

**kim2 - Jo Ann**

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Monday, March 22, 2010 7:26 PM  
**To:** WAM Testimony  
**Cc:** Luella@hfbf.org  
**Subject:** Testimony for HB2832 on 3/24/2010 9:30:00 AM

Testimony for WAM 3/24/2010 9:30:00 AM HB2832

Conference room: 211  
Testifier position: comments only  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: Luella Costales  
Organization: HFBF  
Address:  
Phone:  
E-mail: [Luella@hfbf.org](mailto:Luella@hfbf.org)  
Submitted on: 3/22/2010

Comments:  
Oppose any matching allocation of General Funds

TO: Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair  
Senator Shan S. Tsutsui, Vice-Chair  
Senate Ways and Means Committee

FROM: Penny Levin

DATE: Monday, March 22, 2010  
(Submitted by email)

Aloha honorable Chair and Committee members;

I am testifying as an individual and a taro farmer from Maui in strong support of HB2832 SD1.

As a member of the Taro Security and Purity Task Force, it has been an honor to listen to the voice of so many taro farmers throughout the state and provide to this year's legislature our report *E ola hou ke kalo; ho'i hou ka 'aina le'ia: the taro lives; abundance returns to the land*, which outlines the work of the task force and its subsequent recommendations.

In 2008, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs provided funding which allowed us to meet the first task outlined in Act 211 – to provide recommendations that address taro farmer concerns and improve taro farmer conditions in the state. Unfortunately, the project or program based initiatives either outlined in Act 211 or within the 2010 Report remain unimplemented for lack of funding originally earmarked by the state.

Out of respect for of all the taro farmers, community members and agency partners that have helped to create this report, it is vitally important that these recommendations not sit on a shelf and collect dust like so many other well-intentioned task force reports do.

*In this year where the economic realities of the state preclude funding support, the most important step the legislature can take to move this work forward is to ensure that the task force is empowered and recognized to continue the important work it has begun.*

The connectivity of the many recommendations of the 2010 Report requires a long term, strategic approach. Five years (2015) is a realistic time frame in which to be able to develop and implement a programmatic and strategic approach to the work outlined in the report and to develop the partnerships and resources needed for successful project implementation.

Extending the life of the task force will:

1. Allow us to continue with our kuleana of implementing the range of tasks set forth in Act 211 and those within the 2010 Report to the Legislature.

The task force and Act 211 will sunset on June 30, 2010. The 2010 Legislative Report outlines the significant work that lies ahead, including the remaining tasks of Act 211. Having started this effort and knowing the benefits to be gained, it is all of

our kuleana – from legislators to agencies, taro farmers, consumers and practitioners - to support its success.

2. Ensure that this important group, whose strength lies in the diversity of taro farmers on its body, remains together as a voice for taro farmers and a mechanism for dialogue among farmers and other stakeholders statewide.
3. Keep discussions open and ongoing as we seek solutions to outstanding issues.

In these difficult economic times, supporting the recommendations of the Taro Security and Purity Task Force translates to jobs, greater food self-sufficiency, new small businesses, cultural renewal, improved crop diversity and farm health, greater community resiliency, and much more

Consider the following statistics as the legislature tries to balance the budget and create a path out of recession:

### **1. Jobs**

In Maui County, one estimate places agriculture jobs at 12.5 people per 100 acres. This is typical of plantation style agriculture. The average taro farm is less than 5 acres but provides direct jobs for an average 2-5 people, or 40-100 jobs per 100 acres, not including poi processors, chip makers, kulolo makers, etc.

### **2. Economics and revenues**

In 2009, a recorded 4.3 million pound of raw taro provided more than a million dollars in tax revenues to the state – from only 390 acres. This did not include lu'au leaf or other taro products. The more taro farmers on the land, the greater the revenues to the state and the greater our capacity to meet the full demands of Hawaii's markets, rather than depending on imports.

A survey conducted in 2005 indicated taro growers realized a 50-65% savings to family food budgets by producing their own taro and poi, freeing up money to meet other needs.

Taro is symbolic of the heart of aloha. It is an ambassador for the state to the rest of the world. Its image graces hotels, tourism brochures, advertising campaigns, magazines and movies that sell Hawaii. In this capacity, the revenues it generates for the state are one-hundred fold.

### **3. Food self-sufficiency and security**

At ratio of 1 to 0.75 exchange between raw taro and poi, taro growers provided over 3.2 million pounds of poi to consumers in Hawai'i in 2009. At a ratio of four servings per pound, this put 12.9 million meals on local tables in a single year.

The State of Hawai'i imports 85 to 90 percent of its food. All of the taro plant is edible; the entire crop represents a proportionally high contribution to local food self-sufficiency.

#### **4. Environment**

Traditional taro systems and practices provide a cost-effective means of improving and protecting soil and water resources and mitigating flood zones. Water passing through the taro patch supports native biota and reduces sedimentation to our nearshore reefs. Taro farming communities protect local watersheds. Taro patch systems assist in the long term replenishment of aquifers.

Importing taro, places the state at risk for introduction of new pests and diseases that are expensive to detect and control. Local taro production self-sufficiency eliminates this threat to the environment and agriculture and reduces the cost of biosecurity protection.

#### **5. Culture and wellbeing**

To celebrate and support the rich heritage of Hawaiian culture and knowledge through the preservation and perpetuation of taro and taro farming is an important part of how we survive as a whole. It represents a wealth of science and technology that arose out of the Hawaiian community and is still valid today.

Out of the taro farm comes a livelihood, an education, a classroom, a committed stewardship towards the land and water, a resilient community able to feed itself, and able to care for each other.

Out of the taro comes life!

There could be no better return on such a small investment than to support the continuation of the task force and the implementation of its recommendations.

Please support HB2832 SD1.

Mahalo nui loa.

Penny Levin  
Taro farmer, Wailuku  
Member, Taro Security and Purity Task Force

**kim2 - Jo Ann**

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**From:** bryna rose [brynarose@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 23, 2010 11:53 AM  
**To:** WAM Testimony  
**Subject:** IN SUPPORT- HB 2832, HD1, SD1

Aloha,

I am strongly in support of the continuation and implementation of the Taro Task Force and its recommendations.

I am a young taro farmer on the island of Kauai. I depend completely on taro farming for a living and a future. I have carefully read the Taro Task Force report, I also attended their community scoping meetings and provided my own input, which was fairly incorporated into the report. The final report very clearly and reasonably represents the needs and challenges that we young farmers face. I find that the recommended courses of action outlined in the report are very practical and in fact crucial to being able to continue farming taro and feeding my community into the future. The recommendations that are described in the report **MUST** be implemented. I am also in complete support of continuing the work of the Taro Task Force. Their work and their recommendations are **ESSENTIAL** to food security in Hawaii, and to fair representation of taro farmers in agricultural policy decision making.

Please pass HB 2832, HD1, SD1

If there are any questions about my testimony I can be contacted at 808-349-4324

Mahalo pumehana,

Bryna 'Oliko Storch

Kauai