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Statement of
JESSE K. SOUKI
Interim Director, Office of Planning
Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism
before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
Friday, April 1, 2011
9:30 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 312

in consideration of
SB 631, SD 1, HD1
RELATING TO RENEWABLE ENERGY.

Chair Tsuji, Vice Chair Hashem, and Members of the House Committee on Agriculture.

SB 631, SD 1, HD 1 proposes to increase the areas within the State Agricultural District in which solar energy facilities may be constructed by amending Chapter 205-2(d)(6), which currently restricts solar energy facilities to land with soil classified by the Land Study Bureau's (LSB) detailed land classification as overall (master) productivity rating class "D" or "E".

The Office of Planning notes that the Senate amended this bill to limit solar arrays built on LSB rated "B" and "C" lands to ten percent of each parcel or twenty acres of land, whichever is the lesser, and that solar energy facilities shall not be placed on Important Agricultural Lands (IAL) unless appurtenant to agricultural use.

The Office of Planning has concerns about allowing solar arrays to be built on "B" and "C" rated lands, or IAL, because these quality agricultural lands are needed to improve food security and self-sufficiency for Hawaii. These lands may also be used for growing bio-fuel

crops which contribute to renewable energy self-sufficiency, which would not permanently prevent future food production.

“D” and “E” rated lands comprise over 87 percent of lands in the State Agricultural District. In other words, 3.3 million acres in “D” and “E”, out of the total 3.8 million acres in the State Agricultural District, are potentially available for solar energy facilities in the State. See attached table from the State GIS Program detailing the Land Study Bureau Rating Acreages by Island. Before removing “B” and “C” lands, or IAL, from the State Agricultural District for non-agricultural uses, we recommend a review of whether existing less productive lands already meet the objectives of this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.

Land Study Bureau Ratings
Acreage By Island

LSB TYPE	Hawaii Acres	Kauai Acres	Lanai Acres	Maui Acres	Molokai Acres	Oahu Acres	Total Acres
A	0	9,577	0	32,190	703	16,031	58,500
B	46,430	27,135	0	18,670	0	25,854	118,089
C	214,395	26,229	4,471	36,629	3,930	14,958	300,612
D	570,834	29,220	20,532	95,543	42,036	10,561	768,726
E	<u>1,698,303</u>	<u>246,638</u>	<u>62,226</u>	<u>261,774</u>	<u>117,471</u>	<u>208,602</u>	<u>2,595,013</u>
	2,529,962	338,797	87,228	444,807	164,140	276,005	3,840,941

See also:

http://hawaii.gov/dbedt/gis/lbs_note.htm

<http://hawaii.gov/dbedt/gis/data/lbs.pdf>

Percentages	Hawaii	Kauai	Lanai	Maui	Molokai	Oahu	Statewide
% A & B of total	1.84	10.84	0.00	11.43	0.43	15.18	4.60
% A, B, C of total	10.31	18.58	5.13	19.67	2.82	20.59	12.42

Prepared by Office of Planning, State GIS Program
January 27, 2011

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SB631 SD1 HD1
RELATING TO RENEWABLE ENERGY
House Committee on Agriculture

April 1, 2011

9:30 a.m.

Room 312

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) offers the following comments on SB631 SD1 HD1. This bill has the potential to largely alter the use of agricultural lands in Hawai'i by allowing for solar energy facilities on lands with high capacity for intensive cultivation (lands with overall productivity rating of B or C).

OHA appreciates and understands the need for increased access to renewable energy infrastructure and particularly the need for sustainable access to energy for farmers participating in authentic agricultural activities. OHA notes, however, in establishing agricultural districts, HRS § 205-2 provides that "the greatest possible protection shall be given to those lands with a high capacity for intensive cultivation." Permitting solar energy facilities on lands with overall productivity rating of B or C may remove lands with high capacity for intensive cultivation from future agricultural activities.

Further, OHA notes that D and E rated lands comprise over 87% (or 3.3 million acres) of the lands in the State Agricultural District, which are already potentially available for solar energy facilities in the state. (See March 21, 2011, testimony of Jessie Souki, Interim Director of Planning, on SB631.) We agree with Mr. Souki's recommendation that before removing B and C lands from the State Agricultural District for non-agricultural uses, a review of whether existing less productive lands already meet the objectives of this bill.

Mahalo nui loa for allowing us to provide testimony.