

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
Governor



RUSSELL S. KOKUBUN
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

JAMES J. NAKATANI
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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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LATE

TESTIMONY OF RUSSELL S. KOKUBUN
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON AGRICULTURE AND WATER, LAND,
AND HOUSING
TUESDAY, MARCH 22, 2011
2:00 P.M.
CONFERENCE ROOM 225

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 18
URGING THE CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU TO EXPEND MONIES ALREADY
DEDICATED IN ITS 2010-2011 EXECUTIVE OPERATING BUDGET TO CONDUCT A
STUDY TO MAP AND DETERMINE IMPORTANT AGRICULTURAL LANDS ON
OAHU, FOR THAT PURPOSE.

Chairs Nishihara and Dela Cruz and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Resolution No. 18. The Department of Agriculture strongly supports this Resolution with the following amendment.

We propose adding a reference to the county important agricultural lands identification process described in Section 205-47;

“BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Twenty-sixth Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2011, that the City and County of Honolulu is urged to expend monies set aside in its 2010-2011 Executive Operating Budget and Program to the Department of Planning and Permitting for a study to map and determine important agricultural land on Oahu in consonance with Section 205-47, HRS;”



Over the past two years, over 30,000 acres of some of the best agricultural lands in the State have been designated by the Land Use Commission as Important Agricultural Lands (IAL). These designations were done pursuant to section 205-45 that provides for landowners and farmers to voluntarily petition for IAL designation. In the past few months, two other significant petitions for IAL designation have been filed with the Land Use Commission by owners of agricultural land, including a petition for over 900 acres on Oahu. Upon designation, the owners and farmers of the IAL property have access to the IAL incentives including the qualified agricultural cost tax credit, permitting the development and construction of farm dwellings and employee housing, a guaranty for agricultural and aquacultural operations and capital improvement loans, and the "85%-15%" provision whereby landowners who undertake voluntary identification and subsequent designation of IAL are allowed a transferable development credit equivalent to 15 percent of the land area designated IAL that may be used within the same county and in consonance with the applicable county land use plan.

The Department of Agriculture believes as the Resolution states that the voluntary petition for IAL designation is only part of the effort necessary to fully carry out the IAL law. The counties have the responsibility to identify and map potential IAL pursuant to section 205-47. To date, only the county of Kauai has begun a process to identify IAL as required by statute.

The Department of Agriculture strongly believes that county participation in identifying potential IAL is fundamental to the further advancement of the IAL Law. Protecting and conserving Important Agricultural Lands and related resources and promoting their use in agricultural production comprise much of the foundation upon which the State's initiatives in food and energy security are being established.