



State of Hawaii  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
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**LATE TESTIMONY**

TESTIMONY OF RUSSELL KOKUBUN  
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE  
February 8, 2012  
9:00 A.M.

HOUSE BILL NO. 2860  
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Chairperson Tsuji and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on HB 2860. This bill amends the definition of agricultural land under Chapter 663, Hawaii Revised Statutes to include any land under or equal to 4 acres used primarily for farming and produces an annual taxable revenue greater than \$100,000. The department strongly supports this bill and respectfully requests that "lands administered by the department of agriculture" be included in the definition of agricultural land in excess of 4 acres (page 1, line 11) and land under or equal to 4 acres (page 1, line 17).

The department manages several irrigation systems and administers leases for agricultural parks and non-agricultural park lands and request that lands under the purview of the department also be included in this definition.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



# Environmental Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i

State Democratic Headquarters ♦ 1050 Ala Moana Boulevard, D26 ♦ Honolulu, Hawai'i, 96814  
(808) 596-2980 ♦ <http://EnvironmentalCaucusoftheDemocraticPartyofHawaii.com>

February 8, 2012

Opposition Testimony for HB2860

Re: HB2860 Relating to Agriculture

Aloha Chair Tsuji, Vice Chair Hashem and committee members

We are in strong opposition of HB 2860 because of the impact on small family farms and the Hawaiian Host culture, which are already suffering from a variety of bad regulations, policies and misinterpreted or misrepresented definitions. The small farmer in Hawaii is facing expensive utility costs, big business regulations imposed on small family farms, excessive taxes for farmers who are providing 71% of the harvested crops to help feed the people of Hawaii and the list goes on.

The part of the bill that has created a very big problem states:

“ (1) Any land in excess of four acres used primarily for a farming operation, as defined in section 165-2 [~~;- provided that the term shall include~~], including land used for farm buildings [~~and~~], dwellings, [~~and~~] roads, and irrigation infrastructure associated with the agricultural land[-]; or”

“ (2) Any land under or equal to four acres used primarily for a farming operation, as defined in section 165-2, that produces a demonstrated annual taxable revenue in excess of \$100,000 from farming operations, including land used for farm buildings, roads, and irrigation infrastructure associated with the agricultural land.”

1. The statement “Any land in excess of four acres” and “Any land under or equal to four acres” – what is the reasoning behind using this number? New Small family farmers will reply that they would like to start off with a minimum and then the potential to add on. If a small family farmer can begin with 2 to 3 acres and learn the issues that surround the property and its ecological and environmental impacts they can then better plan the kinds of crops they want to grow.

How can we support new farmers who are out there looking for small parcels to develop their food farming capabilities and then responsibly handle the risk of agribusiness and reduce the potentials for failure? Should this group not even be allowed to start off a little at a time?

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2. What if an existing small family farm, who has owned 3 acres of ag land for generations and wants to maintain Lo`i , as a cultural and traditional farming practice and does not produce \$100,000 of gross sales, and provides an educational tool for our keiki and visitors to Hawaii about the history of Kalo does not comply with this definition as it is written? The small family farmer will lose their agricultural tax advantages and benefits which will then cause this small family farm to be unable to financially support this land and will be forced to sell their heritage and legacy.

Are we going to eliminate this very integral part of Hawaii's Host cultural/agricultural history and the lessons they can learn from this kind of small farming for future keiki and others?

3. What if you own 3 acres of land and produce food crops that gross less than \$100,000 a year and you work with an agricultural cooperative that in total exceeds \$100,000 in gross agribusiness sales. Does the small farmer not qualify under this proposed definition?

If we are hoping to achieve food security and provide safe, environmentally correct and ecologically balanced food farms we should help Hawaii's small family farmers through successful models via good agricultural cooperatives.

The way this bill reads it would be an advantage for developers to rezone pristine, Grade A, agriculturally zoned lands, like Ho'opili and other developers looking to take advantage of our fragile balance for food security through the rezoning of agricultural lands.

The ECDPH strongly opposes this bill and appreciates the opportunity to testify.

Juanita Kawamoto Brown  
Sub Committee Chair  
Food and Farm Sustainability  
Environmental Caucus  
Of the Democratic Party of Hawaii

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 08, 2012 9:26 AM  
**To:** AGRtestimony  
**Cc:** darakawa@lurf.org  
**Subject:** Testimony for HB2860 on 2/8/2012 9:00:00 AM

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Testimony for AGR 2/8/2012 9:00:00 AM HB2860

Conference room: 312  
Testifier position: Support  
Testifier will be present: No  
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Submitted on: 2/8/2012

Comments: