



State of Hawaii
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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TESTIMONY OF RUSSELL S. KOKUBUN
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEES
ON
WAYS AND MEANS

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2012, 9:00 A.M.
CONFERENCE ROOM 211

SENATE BILL NO. 2362 SENATE DRAFT 1
RELATING TO IRRIGATION

Chair Ige and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill No. 2362 Senate Draft 1. The purpose of this bill is to appropriate funds for various irrigation systems and agricultural parks. The Department supports the intent of this bill provided that its passage does not impact the priorities set forth in the Executive Biennium Budget.

The State's irrigation systems provide one of the essential resources to farm. The systems listed in this bill provide irrigation water to over 11,000 acres of farm land. Some of these systems are approaching or are over 100 years old and are in need of significant improvements to reduce water losses and maintenance costs. These funds are necessary to help extend the life of these systems for many decades to come and to continue to move Hawaii toward a more sustainable future.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



**Ka'u Farm Bureau
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COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Senator David Y. Ige, Chair
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair

Friday, February 24, 2012
9:00 a.m.
Conference Room 211

February 22, 2012

Re: Comments in support SB 2362

Aloha Chair Ige, Vice Chairs Kidani, and Members of the Committees:

Ka'u Farm Bureau supports the aforementioned measure.

The 24th and 25th Hawaii State Legislatures, of 2010 and 2011 respectively, saw fit to include a combined \$3.5MM budgetary allocation for Capital Improvement Projects surrounding the Ka'u Irrigation System. Two Governors to date have released only but a fraction of these allocated funds. Issuance of General Obligation Bonds for this purpose represents a path toward moving forward on this long overdue project.

Ka'u is ideally suited for agricultural projects that will foster sustainability, food security, disaster preparedness and drought resistance. Irrigation in Ka'u will foster agricultural and economic development and stimulate job creation and retention by creating an environment in which agriculture can thrive.

There are approximately 30 water source tunnels located on State of Hawaii lands in Ka'u. Since the demise of sugar, many of these sources are largely underutilized and many have not been maintained for more than a decade, resulting in a reduction in productivity. The longer we wait to transition these sources from plantation uses to diversified ones, the further they deteriorate and the more costly improvements become. Working collaboratively with the Agribusiness Development Corporation, a cooperative has been formed to plan, prioritize, advocate for and survey these sources.

Please lend your support for SB2362.

Mahalo,

Chris Manfredi
President