

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
Governor



RUSSELL S. KOKUBUN
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

SCOTT E. ENRIGHT
Deputy to the Chairperson

State of Hawaii
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
1428 South King Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96814-2512
Phone: (808) 973-9600 FAX: (808) 973-9613

**TESTIMONY OF RUSSELL S. KOKUBUN
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

February 11, 2013
9:00 A.M.
ROOM 423

**HOUSE BILL NO. 1421
RELATING TO ORGANIC AGRICULTURE**

Chair Wooley and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill No. 1421. The purpose of this bill is to require the DOA to establish a combined organic agricultural mobilization program to provide affordable long-term leases to farmers to establish small, organic farms. It also authorizes the PUC to establish preferential utility rates for participants of the program and makes an appropriation for an administrative position to oversee the program. The department respectfully opposes this bill as we believe it is unnecessary.

The existing land leasing programs within the department of agriculture (department) already have the ability to lease lands to organic farmers, provided that they qualify as bona fide or new farmers. Any potential lessee has the opportunity to identify and bid on any vacant parcel under our jurisdiction. The department strives to promote all forms of agriculture in a fair and consistent manner and feels that providing special considerations to any one group conflicts with this mission. Additionally, the language explicitly allowing the "construction of farm dwellings,...renewable energy improvements, and necessary infrastructure on the farm land" directly conflicts with provisions of our leases, setting up potential legal actions against the State. While



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these actions are not prohibited, their construction must be carefully evaluated for appropriateness and need, and approved by the Board of Agriculture.

We offer no comments on the proposed roles of the Public Utilities Commission and the High Technology Development Corporation. We also question the confusing method of funding being proposed.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

TESTIMONY OF HERMINA MORITA
CHAIR, PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
STATE OF HAWAII
TO THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

FEBRUARY 11, 2013
9:00 a.m.

MEASURE: H.B. No. 1421

TITLE: Relating to Organic Agriculture

Chair Wooley and Members of the Committee:

DESCRIPTION:

This measure proposes, among other things, to have the Public Utilities Commission (“Commission”) provide preferential utility rates for farmers participating in the Combined Organic Agricultural Mobilization Program (“Program”) to be established by the Department of Agriculture. Eligible Program participants apply to a public utility for preferential utility rates, and then the public utility receiving applications must propose preferential rates to the Commission “for approval.” Finally, H.B. No. 1421 states that all preferential rates approved by the Commission “shall be subsidized” by rates charged to other customers.

POSITION:

While the Commission supports policies that encourage and support agricultural activities in the State, it cannot support any measure that would establish a discriminatory regulatory practice.

COMMENTS:

The Commission cannot support legislation that intends to have utility customers unfairly shoulder the burden of costs created by a single customer class. Section 4 of this bill specifically says that all Commission-approved preferential rates “shall be subsidized by the rates charged to other customers of the utility, if necessary, as determined by the [Commission].”

The use of preferential rates places an unfair burden and a hidden “tax” on the utility ratepayer who does not qualify for the preferential treatment. This bill also highlights potable water as a service area where preferential rates should be provided for Program participants. Many of Hawaii’s water utilities are very small companies with no economies of scale, thus preferential rates would place a significant burden on other water utility customers.

A main objective of the Commission is to stabilize and reduce cost for all ratepayers by ensuring efficiently run utilities. Off-peak rates, a form of rate reduction, should be offered to any ratepayer that can make the electric system more efficient during periods when electricity or usage is low and resources must be curtailed. Such a focus, rather than preferential rates, could be more beneficial to all ratepayers.

Finally, the Commission is concerned that this measure will be a significant burden on the Commission’s staff and resources, and would further detract from its priorities to stabilize and reduce costs for all ratepayers in a fair and equitable way.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

Written Statement of
YUKA NAGASHIMA
Executive Director & CEO
High Technology Development Corporation
before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

Monday, February 11, 2013
9:00 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 423
In consideration of

HB 1421 RELATING TO ORGANIC AGRICULTURE.

Chair Wooley, Vice Chair Onishi, and Members of the Committee Agriculture.

The High Technology Development Corporation (HTDC) **offers comments** on HB 1421 relating to organic Agriculture. HTDC respectfully defers to the Department of Agriculture at this time.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.

AGR

Heard: 2, 11,2013

9AM House Conference Room 423

RE: HB1421

Aloha AGR Chairman Wooley, Rep Onishi and Committee Members,

We strongly support this bill to keep the 'aina sustainable and our ecosystem balanced and PARTICULARLY to protect and perpetuate our natural genetic lines, richness of soil, fauna, plants, animals, foods as nature intended it in "biodiversity." The people of the outer islands are concerned with the direction of Genetic engineering practices taking over these island lands, an approach to farming and practices that are invasive, toxic and not ultimately sustainable for the ecosystem. Do not believe the myth that genetic engineering will feed more people in the world and be supportive of farmers. Over 270,000 farmers in India are proof positive of failure with genetically engineered farming practices that do not support the farmers, according to Shivala Vandana's in India's Parliament, and a slew of reports via the internet from Green Peace and numerous governmental agencies from around the world which I (Unmani) have reviewed, including the Environmental Working Group in the US.

CONSIDER ADDING ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE something like; this bill shall support under the organic mobilization program leases and grants for the promotion of: biomimicry inventions, organic farms, organic community gardens, various types of ECO and AGRO-tours, home agro-tours, school organic planting projects, and various types of organically sustainable practices and education to development projects which develops a more sustainable organic working community. South Maui Sustainability group was an example of this on Maui going for the last few years--a great model but unfortunately lacked the necessary funding to do more. Please support this type of education in your bill. Note South Maui Sustainability | [Change.org](http://www.change.org/organizations/southmauisustainability) www.change.org/organizations/southmauisustainability

There is a tremendously untapped industry in "Biomimicry" <http://biomimicry.net/> in the islands with agriculture and other ways-working with the design and function in nature. There have been a host of lucrative inventions--the tractor, the automobile, the airplane--to name a few, and the Nature Conservancy working with DLNR could be additionally supportive with the Organic Mobilization Program to help with this on our ag lands AND natural areas. We have more endemic species for this than almost anywhere else in the world to learn from and grow with. Let's start putting more of our attention and financial investment support to bills like this--to protect and grow what is naturally here or our biodiversity or we will move more and more toward extinction.

We urge you to maintain its aloha, beauty, and its "natural harmony in nature". We desire to create far more within reach a "natural food" security, supporting programs in which we can discover from what already exists with its multiple innovations to show us--for one, Biomimicry innovation--Permaculture, biodynamic gardening are other vital highly sustainable practices.

We have studied and gardened organically for 44 years, currently have 1/3 of an acre --which is planted in all organic healthy botanicals, fruit trees herbs and greens other than house and driveway-on residential flag lot property on a gulch in Kihei and has been on a So. Maui Sustainability tour in the past. as a model for organic sustainability possible on residential property.

E Malama 'aina,

Unmani Cynthia Groves

Health care practice management consultant to Professionals / Hobby: Organic gardening

Former member of So. Maui Sustainability

Current active Member: Alliance of Maui Community Associations, Kihei Community Association Planning Committee, SW Maui Watershed Advisory, Halau Ke'alaokamaile

Gene Groves

Member Hawaii Farmers Union

Former member of South Maui Sustainability

onishi1-Jerry

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Saturday, February 09, 2013 9:47 AM
To: AGRtestimony
Cc: tabraham08@gmail.com
Subject: *Submitted testimony for HB1421 on Feb 11, 2013 09:00AM*

HB1421

Submitted on: 2/9/2013

Testimony for AGR on Feb 11, 2013 09:00AM in Conference Room 423

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Troy Abraham	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing, improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

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onishi1-Jerry

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Sunday, February 10, 2013 8:15 AM
To: AGRtestimony
Cc: mauirachael@gmail.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB1421 on Feb 11, 2013 09:00AM

HB1421

Submitted on: 2/10/2013

Testimony for AGR on Feb 11, 2013 09:00AM in Conference Room 423

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Rachael Chisom	Individual	Support	No

Comments: I plan to have a small, organic farm on Maui within the next decade and this bill will help provide us a lease for land that is affordable for my organic farm.

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onishi1-Jerry

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Friday, February 08, 2013 3:15 PM
To: AGRtestimony
Cc: pennysfh@hawaii.rr.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB1421 on Feb 11, 2013 09:00AM

HB1421

Submitted on: 2/8/2013

Testimony for AGR on Feb 11, 2013 09:00AM in Conference Room 423

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Penny Levin	Individual	Comments Only	No

Comments: I strongly support this bill. Organic whole foods are the fastest growing sector of Hawaii's agriculture community, particularly on neighbor islands. They currently provided the highest rate of return for farm produce to the grower and are a significant factor in the increased viability of small farms. This diversity of crops and produce supplies restaurants, hotels, organic groceries and the health and wellness industry in the state. The demand is just beginning to be tapped. An increase in small organic farms also means more locally generated revenues that stay in Hawaii longer, a sign of a healthy and more stable economy. I encourage the members of the AG Committee to vote in support of this bill!

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onishi1-Jerry

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Sunday, February 10, 2013 4:18 PM
To: AGRtestimony
Cc: nredfeather@kohalacenter.org
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB1421 on Feb 11, 2013 09:00AM

HB1421

Submitted on: 2/10/2013

Testimony for AGR on Feb 11, 2013 09:00AM in Conference Room 423

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Nancy Redfeather	Individual	Comments Only	No

Comments: I don't think that HTDC really needs to be involved. High Technology is not a hallmark of Organic Agriculture. Affordable Long Term leases is essential for farmers to "invest" in improving the soil and infrastructure of the farm. That could take between 7- 11 years in organic agriculture systems. But it is like creating a bank account. The soil fertility will be there when you are finished with use, and it will be better than when you started. Organic Agriculture is about building healthy systems. High Technology is used when it is useful for some reason. I think I would strike that part of the bill, doesn't make sense.

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onishi1-Jerry

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Sunday, February 10, 2013 9:23 PM
To: AGRtestimony
Cc: crystalkpaul@yahoo.com
Subject: *Submitted testimony for HB1421 on Feb 11, 2013 09:00AM*

HB1421

Submitted on: 2/10/2013

Testimony for AGR on Feb 11, 2013 09:00AM in Conference Room 423

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Crystal Kia Paul	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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