



**STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS**

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February 19, 2013

To: The Honorable Sylvia Luke, Chair, the Honorable Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair, the Honorable Aaron Ling Johanson, Vice Chair, and Members of the House Committee on Finance

Date: Wednesday, February 20, 2013

Time: 3:30 p.m.

Place: Conference Room 308, State Capitol

From: Dwight Y. Takamine, Director
Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR)

Re: H.B. No. 749 HD1, Relating to Workforce Development

I OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED LEGISLATION

H.B. 749 HD1 proposes to establish a Hawaii Agriculture Workforce Advisory Board composed of representatives from Departments of Labor and Industrial Relations, Agriculture, and Education; University of Hawaii, Community Colleges, Farm Bureau, and a representative of the farming community selected by the chair to promote agricultural self-sufficiency in the State and develop an agricultural workforce. To accomplish these goals, an agricultural workforce plan would cover the following:

- Introduce Hawaii's youth to agriculture-related activities that would promote interest and aptitude in agricultural sustainability;
- Promote the development of future leaders in the agricultural sector;
- Identify training opportunities for future workforce participants; and
- Develop a seamless Hawaii P-20 program to transition future agricultural workforce participants into the workforce.
- Appropriate funds to assist in establishing and supporting the board.

DLIR supports this proposal provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities in the Executive Budget.

II. CURRENT LAW

Chapter 226, HRS, establishes that it shall be the policy of the State to promote economically competitive activities that increase Hawaii's agricultural workforce and livelihood.

III. COMMENTS ON THE HOUSE BILL

This bill would support the Governor's priorities to build a self-sustaining agricultural industry. The proposal also would expand the successful collaborations developed among several state, local, and private businesses to promote a more competitive and trained agricultural workforce. For example, a Veteran-to-Farmer pilot project resulted in the recent graduation of 14 Big Island Hawaiian homesteaders, including 7 military veterans, from a new college course that provided classroom and hands-on experience in establishing a productive farm.

Besides learning farming techniques, these graduates acquired skills for managing their own businesses, which are critical for successful farming. Resources used in the project were leveraged among different funding sources of all partners. The goal of the project is to replicate the program statewide so that every University campus can offer similar training in their area, provided sufficient land and water are available.

Preceding the pilot project was a series of Agricultural Skill Panels conducted in each county that were co-sponsored by the Departments of Labor and Industrial Relations and Agriculture to solicit local input and recommendations toward development of an agricultural workforce plan in Hawaii. Over 600 individuals, including farmers and agribusinesses, participated. Their recommendations were considered and incorporated into legislative proposals that became part of the Governor's Package.

These efforts would not have been possible without the contributions of all agencies involved. To sustain and build upon this effort, the partnerships must be supported and strengthened so that separate and disparate workforce training programs among different institutions become comprehensive and well-defined career pathways.

A major cause of insufficient agricultural workers is a common but no longer accurate image of farming as a low-skilled and low-paying job. This perception can only be dispelled by a collective effort among educators, training organizations, and the community in delivering more accurate, updated information about the increasingly complex nature of farming, and through the development of multiple career ladders to address different skill levels required in the agricultural industry.

Therefore, DLIR supports this measure provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities in our Executive Budget.

HB749

Submitted on: 2/17/2013

Testimony for FIN on Feb 20, 2013 15:30PM in Conference Room 308

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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