

LATE

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**Subject:** Submitted testimony for SB2037 on Jan 23, 2014 14:45PM  
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**SB2037**

Submitted on: 1/23/2014

Testimony for AGL on Jan 23, 2014 14:45PM in Conference Room 229

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Chris Mentzel	Individual	Support	No

Comments: I applaud the intention of this bill to provide important training to farmers. While it is easier and has become common to use chemicals to make food grow, there is significant concern as to the cost and safety of pesticides. Organic growing needs considerably more detail knowledge, but provides for less cost and higher income for farmers. If we can help existing and new farmers to this knowledge, we all benefit.

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Taro Security and Purity Task Force  
TESTIMONY

**Senate Bill SB2037**  
**RELATING TO AGRICULTURE**

The Taro Security and Purity Task Force is an independent legislative body mandated under Hawai'i State Legislature Act 211 to address a broad range of issues facing taro and taro farmers across the State. Its members, who include taro farmers from each island, State agencies and institutions, and other organizations, are tasked with advising lawmakers on taro-related policy matters along with supporting the implementation of measures and programs of benefit to taro and taro farmers. In recognition of the State of Hawai'i's severe dependence on outside imports to meet the nutritional demands of a growing population, the task force has identified alternative farming methods and community education as primary concerns in its efforts to support future food security in the State.

SB2037 establishes a farming technique mentor program with the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture to educate farmers and farming organizations in using alternative agricultural methods and locally sourced inputs and appropriates \$250,000 out of the State's general revenues fund to implement this program. The proposed program educates farmers on a diversity of soil care and farm management techniques specifically centered around locally sourced soil inputs.

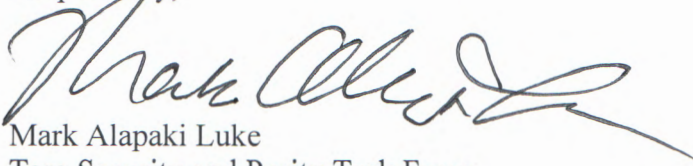
The Taro Task Force finds that the cost of imported soil amendments, both chemical and organic, account for more than one-third of all costs on farm. Those costs are climbing as the costs of fossil fuel increases. Taro farmers across the islands are shifting to, and have a strong interest in, learning more about organic farming methods, locally sourced inputs to improve soil health and control pests on-farm, and diversifying their crop to create new markets. Rotations and fallowing techniques, inter-cropping, cultivar diversity, recycling alien limu into composted soil, biochar, enhancing natural micro-organisms, and other methods are all part of seeking to reduce farm costs and producing higher quality food, thus contributing to the overall economic viability of farming in Hawai'i, especially for small-scale operations.

Among the taro farming community, members are sharing their knowledge and experience in these alternative techniques with other farmers and across communities. Beginning farmer programs on Moloka'i and Hawai'i Island serve as a model for farmer mentor programs. In the effort to meet the increasing demand of young people becoming interested in taro farming, the Taro Task Force will draw from the preliminary results of these beginning farming programs to develop a curriculum specifically for beginning taro farmers.

The Taro Security and Purity Task Force sees the need for and strongly supports this measure and the appropriation of \$250,000 of State general revenue funds to cover the necessary material and logistical costs of implementation. Development of such a program will benefit both new and existing taro growers, will assist in increasing Hawai'i's food security in the long term, and take advantage of growing community interest in diversifying the State's agriculture industry.

Taro Security and Purity Task Force  
TESTIMONY

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Alapaki Luke". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and a long, sweeping tail.

Mark Alapaki Luke  
Taro Security and Purity Task Force  
Chair

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**SB2037**

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<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Wilson Angel	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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