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February 17, 2015

HEARING BEFORE THE  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

TESTIMONY ON HB 823 HD 1  
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL THEFT

Room 325  
2:00 PM

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair San Buenaventura, and Members of the Committee:

I am Christopher Manfredi, President of the Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation (HFB). Organized since 1948, the HFBF is comprised of 1,932 farm family members statewide, and serves as Hawaii's voice of agriculture to protect, advocate and advance the social, economic and educational interests of our diverse agricultural community.

**HFB supports HB 823 HD 1** that would establish a two-year agricultural theft pilot project to work with the county of Hawaii to hire an enforcement officer within the county of Hawaii to focus on investigating and prosecuting agricultural theft.

Agricultural theft and vandalism are persistent problems facing agriculture. Weather, drought, pests, weeds, disease, activists, unstable markets, transportation and labor issues, and a changing climate all contribute to uncertainty for farmers and ranchers. Few businesses face such challenges, yet we are charged with producing food, fiber, fuel and flowers for the 99% of non-farmers. Add in the constant threat and impacts of trespass, theft and vandalism, and it's a wonder farms and ranches remain viable.

In working with our members, HDOA, and law enforcement, we have collectively concluded that a dedicated enforcement officer housed in the county prosecutor's office would be a giant step forward in minimizing agricultural crimes and enhancing public safety. Too often a farmer or rancher has sweated, worried, and worked to the bone to produce a crop, only to wake up one morning to find that an opportunistic criminal has helped himself to the harvest. Farmers and ranchers are fed up with this activity and frankly, deserve better. We understand that law enforcement resources are often prioritized for public health and safety. Is the health, safety and livelihood of a farmer and his family any less important? We think not.

Thank you for passing HB 823 HD 1.