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**TESTIMONY OF SCOTT E. ENRIGHT
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

March 1, 2016
1:40 P.M.
CONFERENCE ROOM 211

**SENATE BILL NO. 2137 SD 1
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE**

Chairperson Tokuda and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill No. 2137 SD 1 that encourages the development and implementation of a “whole farm system approach” to agriculture in Hawaii. This bill requires the Department of Agriculture to:

- Create an on-farm mentoring program to teach farmers about “whole farm systems”;
- Appoint on-farm mentors for each of the major islands except, by definition, Lanai;
- Develop, with the assistance of the Hawaii Farmers Union United; a curriculum for the on-farm mentoring program that emphasizes organic and other bio-diverse agricultural amendments using waste products and other inputs, and recycle nutrients back into the soil; farm management, animal husbandry, farmer/food cooperatives, beneficial insects, etc.;
- With a \$500,000 appropriation from the general fund, support existing on-farm mentoring programs and develop a pilot on-farm mentoring program on Maui County.

The Department of Agriculture offers comments.

The Department of Agriculture supports efforts to improve the capacity of new and existing farms to succeed in their endeavors. We support all forms of agricultural activities and practices. However, the Department of Agriculture is not structured for or has any practical experience with establishing and implementing an agricultural educational program.



The University of Hawaii, College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources hosts the GoFarm Hawaii program which is a mentoring program that focuses on providing farmers with the practical skills and knowledge necessary to become a successful agricultural entrepreneur. This program is currently being provided free to interested farmers and has a curriculum that covers the fundamentals of farm production and business management and exposes participants to the realities of farming through the experience of seasoned farmers, all with the goal to transition program participants into commercial farming. Additionally, the program is designed to assist farmers in becoming viable production growers in a manner that encourages sustainability. The Department has provided funding and support for this program and believes additional support could expand this program's reach and effectiveness.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our testimony.