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Testimony of
SUZANNE D. CASE
Chairperson

Before the House Committee on
WATER & LAND

Wednesday, February 8, 2017
9:00 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 325

In consideration of
HOUSE BILL 259
RELATING TO COMMUNITY FOOD FORESTS

House Bill 259 proposes to establish a community food forest program that works collaboratively to provide a source of healthy food. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) appreciates the intent of this bill, but believes it would be more appropriately implemented under the county jurisdiction.**

Community food forests provide a number of benefits to the public including increased urban tree canopy, watershed health, providing food sources, as well as contributes to healthy communities through physical activity. The Department's Division of Forestry and Wildlife has a number of programs that provide support of community engagement in stewardship of Hawaii's forest lands, such as the Forest Stewardship Program (FSP), Kaulunani Urban and Community Forestry Program (UCF), and community stewardship projects within the Forest Reserve System (FRS). Several successful community projects include the Kokua Kalihi Valley's food and medicinal gardens on the Department's State Park lands funded in part by the FSP and UCF programs, and the Keanae Arboretum and lo'i taro garden on forest reserve land in Maui funded by the Hawaii Tourism Authority and the FRS. Through these partnerships, the Department is successfully supporting communities with local food resources, discouraging vandalism, and improving health through the active community management of these lands.

The Department believes that through these existing programs, the goals for House Bill 259 are being met; however, supplemental funding could increase the programs' reach within communities. If a Community Food Forest Program is developed and targeted for use in urban parks, the Department believes the counties would be better equipped to implement and oversee those specific program goals.