



SIERRA CLUB OF HAWAI'I
MĀLAMA I KA HONUA. *Cherish the Earth.*

JOINT SENATE COMMITTEE ON WATER AND LAND
AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT
PUBLIC SAFETY, INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

Thursday, February 16, 2017 1:15PM Room 229

LATE

In SUPPORT SB481 Relating to Important Agricultural Lands

Aloha Chairmen Rhoads, Gabbard, and Nishihara and members of the joint committee,

On behalf of our 20,000 members and supporters, the Sierra Club of Hawai'i supports the intent of SB481, which seeks to support counties in mapping their important agricultural lands through grants-in-aid.

Since 1968, the Sierra Club of Hawai'i has been working to protect the unique natural and cultural resources of our islands. We have been deeply involved in efforts to preserve the integrity of our agricultural lands.

A key aspect of the Important Agricultural Lands concept is the county level maps detailing which areas are considered IAL and therefore in need of greater protection from development. Unfortunately, counties have not had the time, resources, or incentive to complete this important mapping process.

While we appreciate the intent of this bill to motivate counties with state funds to complete their maps, we encourage this joint committee to consider the proposal in HB1584. In that bill, counties are provided funds and a specific timeframe for completing their IAL maps. If the counties cannot complete the maps in that timeframe, then the Land Use Commission is directed to do so, using the funds set aside for the counties.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to provide testimony on this important issue.

Mahalo,

Marti Townsend
Director



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February 16, 2017

HEARING BEFORE THE

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WATER AND LAND
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT
SENATE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY, INTERGOVERNMENTAL, AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

TESTIMONY ON SB 481
RELATING TO IMPORTANT AGRICULTURAL LANDS

Room 229
1:15 PM

Aloha Chairs Rhoads, Gabbard, and Nishihara, and Members of the Committees:

I am Randy Cabral, President of the Hawaii Farm Bureau (HFB). Organized since 1948, the HFB is comprised of 1,900 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 strongly support SB 481, providing funds to complete mapping of Important Agricultural Lands.

Designation of Important Agricultural Lands originated in the 1979 Hawaii Constitutional Convention, and was finally codified in 2005, Act 183. This culminated nearly 30 years of work. Initial attempts involved mapping strongly opposed by landowners. Finally, in 2004, landowners, policymakers, farmers, ranchers, NGOs such as TPL met monthly to create what became 183. We looked at various practices across the country. Dependence on land purchases was not deemed feasible. A cornerstone of the final measure was the recognition that designation of lands as agriculture alone did not mean you have agriculture. **WITHOUT A VIABLE FARMER AND RANCHER ON THE LAND, YOU ONLY HAVE OPEN SPACE.**

We recognized the importance of respecting private property rights. Therefore the measure included voluntary designation coupled with eventual county mapping and designation by the LUC. Resources were targeted to incentivize farming operations. We took lessons from other states, where transfer or purchase of development rights alone resulted in unintended consequences. While land prices are kept at reasonable rates, this impacts the collateral value of the land. Additionally, if the funds raised in the purchase of development rights is not reinvested in the land, the farmer is left without means to fund needed infrastructure.

The Counties need to develop maps identifying lands deserve IAL designation. These maps need to go through a Council approval process along with public hearings before presented to the LUC for approval.

This mechanism is available to protect agricultural lands for future generations. Over 100K acres have been voluntarily designated. State tax credits for infrastructure improvements was the cost to the State. a small fraction of the cost for purchase of the lands.

Investments to complete the mapping process and begin the official County designation process is a good use of resources.

For this reason, we respectfully request your **strong support of SB 481**.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Wednesday, February 15, 2017 10:25 PM
To: WTL Testimony
Cc: warrenmcfb@gmail.com
Subject: *Submitted testimony for SB481 on Feb 16, 2017 13:15PM*



SB481

Submitted on: 2/15/2017

Testimony for WTL/AEN/PSM on Feb 16, 2017 13:15PM in Conference Room 229

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Warren Watanabe	Maui County Farm Bureau	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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