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LATE

February 28, 2018

HEARING BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

TESTIMONY ON SB 2846, SD1
RELATING TO IRRIGATION

Room 211
10:45 AM

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and Members of the Committee:

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.

The Hawaii Farm Bureau strongly supports SB 2846, SD1, which transfers operational authority over the portions of the east Kauai irrigation system operated and maintained by the east Kauai water users' cooperative to the department of agriculture, establishes positions within the agricultural resource management division, and authorizes GO bonds for plans, designs, land acquisition, and equipment.

Since the demise of plantation operations across the islands, we have seen the erosion of irrigation systems. Ditches that carried water fell into disrepair with major leaks in the system, and in cases such as Kau, cracks in tunnels created enough losses that there is no longer significant flow of water. The Legislature continues to advocate for increased self-sufficiency and sustainability. Agriculture must play a key role in the process and for there to be agriculture, water is important.

The East Kauai Irrigation System services more than 12,500 acres of agricultural land on Kauai. The repair and maintenance of this 21-mile irrigation system is critical for Kauai's farmers who depend on the East Kauai Irrigation System for their operations. Water availability is a basic necessity needed by farmers and ranchers to maintain and expand their production, particularly in times of drought. Having a reliable water supply is a key factor when Hawaii's farmers and ranchers are making decisions to start new or to expand existing operations.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide our opinion on this important matter.



Kalepa Koalition

5868 Kini Place
Kapaa, Hawaii 96746
Phone/Fax: 808-639-0152

LATE

February 28, 2018

TO: COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair

**RE: Testimony on SB 2846, SD1 Relating to Irrigation
February 28, 2018, Conference Room 211**

Chairperson Cruz and Members of the Committee:

My name is Les Milnes and I **support SB2846**. I am the president of the Kalepa Koalition, an Hawaii agricultural cooperative of the farmers and ranchers who hold long-term licenses on 6,500 acres of State land behind Kalepa Ridge on Kauai and under the administration of ADC.

The East Kauai Water Users Cooperative System can presently service more than 1,000 acres of the Kalepa lands. In just the last few years, ADC has converted nearly 300 acres of irrigable land from ranching to farming, and has more prospective farmers under consideration.

We believe the Department of Agriculture is the logical agency to manage this State-owned system.

I respectfully request that this bill be passed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Les Milnes".

Leslie P. Milnes, President
Kalepa Koalition



**East Kauai
Water Users' Cooperative**

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February 28, 2018

TO: COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair

RE: **Testimony on SB 2846, SD1 Relating to Irrigation
February 28, 2018, Conference Room 211**

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Chairperson Cruz and Members of the Committee

My name is Jerry Ornellas and **I strongly support SB 2846**. I am the president of the East Kauai Water Users' Cooperative which has managed the State-owned reservoir and ditch system in the Kapaa/Kalepa area for the past 17 years under a year-to-year revocable permit from DLNR. On September 20, 2016, the Coop was informed by DLNR it would have to seek a long-term water lease. We were given three years to complete the application process which includes an Environmental Impact Statement that is beyond our monetary resources to pay for. As well, it is likely other aspects of the water lease process and agreement are beyond our means.

We are therefore in favor of SB 2846 allowing the East Kauai system be taken over by the Department of Agriculture. Our system includes two reservoirs and 22 miles of ditch which has historically serviced thousands of acres of State and private lands. In particular, it services more than 1,000 acres of the State Kalepa lands located between Kapaa and Lihue. When first taken out of sugar cane in 2001, these had gone into pasture, but in the last few years, through the good action of the Agribusiness Development Corporation, nearly 300 acres has been leased to farmers who are actively developing their crops, including ginger and sweet potatoes. This is only possible because the Coop can provide these farms with water.

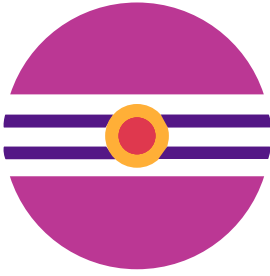
Aside from the State lands, the Coop system can service thousands of acres of so-called "marginal lands"—those not taken by the cane companies and now privately owned. These are located throughout Kapaa and are or could be productive agricultural lands, such as my own farm.

The Department of Agriculture is the natural State agency to manage this public water system, as is the pattern in most other states in the country. It is also the only long-term, permanent way to manage the system.

I respectfully ask that you pass this bill.

East Kauai Water Users' Cooperative

Jerry Ornellas, President



Saiva Siddhanta Church

Kauai's Hindu Monastery
107 Kaholalele Road
Kapaa, Hawaii 96746-9304•USA
Phone: (808) 822-3012

February 27, 2018

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair

LATE

Testimony on SB 2846, SD1 Relating to Irrigation February 28, 2018, Conference Room 211

Chairperson Cruz and Members of the Committee:

We **strongly support** SB2846. We are a founder member of the East Kauai Water Users' Cooperative Board of Directors which maintains 22 miles of ditch and several reservoirs in and around Kapaa. It also service more than 1,000 acres of State lands located in Kalepa and potentially could service nearly the entire 6,500 acres of Kalepa.

It is not economically practical for our local Coop to fulfill the requirements for a water license from DLNR for this State-owned system. The logical department to manage it is the Department of Agriculture, who are willing to do so.

This will ensure the long-term preservation of this valuable system—estimated by State consultants to be worth “more than two hundred million dollars”—in service of local farmers and ranchers.

Saiva Siddhanta Church

Acharya Arumuganathaswami

Acharya Arumuganathaswami
Farm Manager