

DAVID Y. IGE
Governor

JOSH GREEN
Lt. Governor



PHYLLIS SHIMABUKURO-GEISER
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

MORRIS M. ATTA
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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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**TESTIMONY OF PHYLLIS SHIMABUKURO-GEISER
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

**MAY 13, 2020
1:00 P.M.
CONFERENCE ROOM 016**

**GOVERNOR'S MESSAGE NO. 641 SUBMITTING FOR CONSIDERATION AND
CONFIRMATION TO THE BOARD OF AGRICULTURE, GUBERNATORIAL NOMINEE, EN
YOUNG, FOR A TERM TO EXPIRE 06-30-2021**

Chairperson Gabbard and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of GM641 En Young's appointment to the Board of Agriculture. Mr. Young has a broad array of professional experience that spans the governmental, private and nonprofit sectors. He has previously worked for the Department of Industrial Relations' Office of Community Services where he oversaw a variety of state and federally-funded programs designed to alleviate poverty, including supervision of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Emergency Food Program and the Senior Farmer's Market Nutrition Program. He then served as the Executive Director of the Food Basket where he led the successful implementation of a SNAP-based CSA program that was focused on food sustainability and a new food insecurity nutrition incentive program. He most recently has served as the General Manager at Sensei Holding, Inc. where he manages marketing and a modern hydroponic farm. In addition to his professional experience, he donates his time serving with nonprofits, including as a Board member with the Hawaii Alliance of Nonprofit Organizations. Mr. Young's experience and kokua will make him a valuable addition to the Hawaii Board of Agriculture.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.





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Executive Officers

Joe Carter, Coca-Cola Bottling of Hawaii, *Chair*
Charlie Gustafson, Tamura Super Market, *Vice Chair*
Eddie Asato, The Pint Size Corp., *Secretary/Treas.*
Lauren Zirbel, HFIA, *Executive Director*
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Stan Brown, Acosta Sales & Marketing, *Advisor*
Paul Kosasa, ABC Stores, *Advisor*
Derek Kurisu, KTA Superstores, *Advisor*
Beau Oshiro, C&S Wholesale Grocers, *Advisor*
Toby Taniguchi, KTA Superstores, *Advisor*

TO:

Committee on Agriculture and Environment
Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair
Senator Russell E. Ruderman, Vice Chair

FROM: HAWAII FOOD INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION
Lauren Zirbel, Executive Director

DATE: May 13, 2020
TIME: 1pm
PLACE: Conference Room 16

RE: GM 641

Position: Support

The Hawaii Food Industry Association is comprised of two hundred member companies representing retailers, suppliers, producers, and distributors of food and beverage related products in the State of Hawaii.

HFIA is in support of the nomination of En Young to the Board of Agriculture. En has been an advocate for Hawaii food and Hawaii agriculture for many years and will bring a wealth of valuable experience to this role. As Executive Director of Hawaii Island's Food Basket, he worked to alleviate food insecurity on the Big Island. As General Manager of Sensei Farms En has been helping to create the future of agriculture in our state. En's expertise and dedication to Hawaii's food and agriculture industries make him an excellent candidate for the Board. We are very pleased to offer our support for this nomination and we thank you for the opportunity to testify.

GM-641

Submitted on: 5/12/2020 2:11:47 PM

Testimony for AEN on 5/13/2020 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Ikaika Rawlins	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Dear Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Ruderman, and Members of the Committee on Agriculture and the Environment,

I am submitting this testimony in strong **SUPPORT** of Mr. En Young's appointment to the Board of Agriculture. I have known Mr. Young for over 30 years and believe that he has the skills, experience, and character to make a valuable contribution to the important work of the Board.

Mr. Young has a broad range of experience in agriculture, from state government to nonprofit organizations to private sector companies developing new technology and farming techniques designed to enhance food sustainability efforts within the State of Hawaii. I fully expect Mr. Young to apply this extensive and diverse experience in creative ways to help advance the work, purpose, and mission of the Board of Agriculture.

In sum, I strongly **SUPPORT** Mr. Young's appointment to the Board of Agriculture and respectfully request that this Committee approve this appointment.

Sincerely,

Ikaika B. Rawlins

GM-641

Submitted on: 5/13/2020 12:55:46 PM

Testimony for AEN on 5/13/2020 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
HERBERT M. "TIM" RICHARDS, III	Testifying for Hawaii County Council	Support	No

Comments:

The Honorable Mike Gabbard, Chair
Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment
Hawai`i State Capitol
415 So. Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

Aloha e Chair Gabbard, Vice-Chair Ruderman, and members of the committee,

First of all, thank you all for performing the people's business during this time of uncertainty. It is not often that a single threat calls into question everything we thought we knew. Your task to rebuild and restructure our government and economy is great.

As the scope of recovery continues to mount, there is a need for members of the community to evaluate ideas, analyze our systems, and execute on a public vision. In addition to the limited resources of the annual State budget, we will need allies, partnerships, and collective experience to build our new identity.

I ask you today to allow me to use my skills and experience to participate in the revitalization of Hawai`i. This crisis is a tremendous catalyst for change, whether we welcome it or not. Use it as a chance to say farewell to ideas and structures that have failed to deliver on promises, to reinforce and support the individuals and businesses that provide hope, and embrace new technologies and methods that set the foundation for a prosperous tomorrow.

It is an exciting time to be a public servant, and a true privilege to be able to submit for your consideration my candidacy to the Hawai`i State Board of Agriculture.

Me ka ha`aha`a,



En Young

Written Response to Questions from Committee on Agriculture

1. Why do you wish to be a member of the Board of Agriculture?

In short, I would like to be part of influencing the direction of Agriculture in Hawai`i. While there is strong public interest in the revitalization of agriculture, there is little awareness of the business side of agriculture, acceptance of the basis of our agricultural economy, and strategy to ameliorate structural and systemic barriers to improve conditions for those who want to practice.

I know from my experience on other public boards that the agenda of a Board can significantly influence public dialogue. The power to convene, as well as the power to examine and deconstruct arguments can both be done at the Board level. Unlike the Legislature or a courtroom setting, proceedings and official business can be structured to be much less adversarial and conducted at a pace more respectful of the complexity of the issue. I believe I can assist in this matter.

Lastly, on Lana`i I assisted in building a modern farm business from scratch. I'm aware of the challenges of starting fresh, applying capital, and deploying new technology. This voice is important on the Board if our Department is to consider and evaluate new opportunities.

2. How do you perceive the role and responsibilities of a member of the Board of Agriculture?

In general, the Board of Agriculture is an Executive Board, meaning a director's role is to evaluate and approve the business of the department. Departmental divisions will have a wide latitude in setting Board agenda items, with the Chair prioritizing as needed to keep meetings efficient. Our responsibility is to come to meetings prepared and with the full range of our experiences, while setting aside any personal or business motivations.

More specifically, the Department handles proposals that affect the regulation and lands under its purview, as well as permissions on the importation of plants and animals.

While the Department interprets and carries out the statutory authority it has been granted, the Board has a broader scope. Looking at the overall landscape of Agriculture, the Board balances competing concerns and goals in the interest of the public. This may require information gathering, an inventory of current projects, an evaluation and approval of priorities, and, most of all, it requires a vision to measure the progress that each of the proposals purport to achieve.

The Board, beyond its decision-making role can assist with setting departmental priorities, being liaisons to the public both within industry and outside, commission reports from the department to assist in decision making and be a voice and facilitator to help catalyze an agricultural vision. These final responsibilities mentioned above are not the formal duties of a Board member, however they are absolutely necessary if we, as the State of Hawai`i, are going to move forward in the same direction.

3. Given your understanding of the role and responsibilities of a member of the Board of Agriculture, why do you believe that you are qualified for the position? Please include a brief statement of your skills, expertise, or knowledge that would aid in your decision-making ability as a member of the Board of Agriculture.

Most of my childhood was spent on an industrial scale macadamia orchard, where my father worked his way up to leave as the General Manager. At the time, it was the largest macadamia nut orchard in the world, nestled in South Kona. I realize growing up on a farm is not a job qualification. However, all of us grew up watching the machinery of industrialized agriculture work. Agriculture is a lifestyle, and a childhood on an orchard taught me that you are there at the pleasure of your plants and animals, not the other way around.

For a time, we also leased our own farm in Pepe`ekeo on the Big Island. My dad then started a taro growers' co-op, where we'd help pull weeds, plant huli, and harvest with other farmers on the island. From South Kona, we might wake up at three a.m. to go to Hamakua and help out with someone who's crop was ready or was getting behind in the weeding. Likewise, they would help us when it was our turn. A friend would grind the poi at his house and I would drive island wide to deliver some of the best poi anyone has ever had, fresh or sour. This experience got me thinking about cooperative labor strategies, market size, and distribution.

A few years later I found myself working for the State at the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations in an office called the Office of Community Services. There, I ran a program for a time called The Emergency Food Assistance Program, or TEFAP. This program is a United States Department of Agriculture program that supports commodity markets by purchasing excess commodity nationwide and distributing it to food banks. I would do evaluations for the food banks and set up logistics to get onions from Georgia, cranberries from Washington, and rice from California, among others. I learned about food procurement and the national food supply chain, as well as agricultural market subsidies through the USDA and other private foundations.

I left the State to become the Executive Director of The Food Basket, Hawai`i Island's Food Bank. There, my staff and I put together a new vision for a food bank as a source of nutrition and a support for local farmers. We attempted to steer funds from the largest social service program in the Country, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, to local farmers. The SNAP-based CSA and accompanying "double-bucks" program continues to create win-win situations for low-income individuals and the local economy.

Over the last two and a half years, I've been the General Manager of Sensei Farms, Lana`i, a hydroponic start-up seeking to infuse tech with agriculture and use agriculture as a tool for human wellness. As a new venture, we've had to comply with the most recent versions of the Food Safety Modernization Act, as well as attracting and training an agricultural workforce on an island that has not seen production scale agriculture in over two decades. To get the business up and running, I educated myself, getting certificates as a Preventative Control Qualified Individual (PCQI), the Produce Safety Alliance (PSA) Training, and am also a licensed Restricted Use Pesticide (RUP) applicator.

I believe these experiences in procurement and maximizing cross-market potential in addition to direct agricultural experience will allow me to be a resource for the board in decision making, a resource for the department in new initiatives, and a resource for the public as both a receptacle for collection and a voice of dissemination in agricultural matters.

4. What do you hope to accomplish during your term of service?

As you well know, crafting good policy takes time and change takes time. In agriculture, plants, animals, and fish do not respond to the urgency of human beings. No amount of policy will make a tree bear fruit before it is ready. However, I believe if I am given the opportunity, I can contribute to what is necessary now, the reevaluation of the economy and the integration of agriculture into the new economy. My experience in government, non-profit, and the private sector allow me to translate between the two, and I've made serious mistakes which I would like to turn into learning opportunities for others.

In the end, I've been a State employee as well, and I would consider it a great accomplishment to help put into place any resources or frameworks that allow them to succeed.

5. Name three qualities that best describe you and that would make you stand out. How would these qualities benefit the Board of Agriculture?

I can promise this committee and everyone in the State that I will do my due diligence. I take my commitments seriously and explore as many possibilities as I can prior to making

decisions. I try to hear as many sides to an argument as possible and when I do not know something, I will ask.

Other than that, I don't believe anyone is an objective judge of their personal qualities. I will be happy to provide references of character and professional acumen.

This institution, like other boards, are made up of people, and it is their diverse experiences and perspectives that shape good policy. I believe to give the best contribution to this or any board, I need to be prepared and to be genuine. Only by being our unique selves will we stand out, as individuals, and as a unit.

6. Name one previous experience that would make you stand out. How would this benefit the Board of Agriculture?

At Sensei, we leverage technology to answer common agricultural business questions such as how to timely and correctly apply labor, how to judiciously use inputs, and how to effectively control pests.

Looking at the Board's current composition, there are others who have been in government, those with long careers in agriculture and distribution which overlap and extend beyond my own. I believe it is only the application of technology at its most current that distinguishes me from the talent and experience already assembled.

However, I also see myself as contributing a well-rounded Director, if appointed. Pursuing agricultural goals from many sectors is something to also be valued from my perspective.

7. Can you foresee any possible conflicts of interests that could arise during your service on the Board of Agriculture? How would you overcome any possible conflicts of interest?

Currently, the only possible conflict of interest I can foresee is any business of Sensei Farms that may come before the board. The formal method of dealing with conflict is recusal, which I would do in the case of an approval or denial for that entity. My father is retired and none of my family is currently employed or an investor in the agricultural sector. I will file my disclosures on time and hope to earn the trust of the people by being proactive and transparent in my dealings.