

STAND. COM. REP. NO. 1289

Honolulu, Hawaii

**MAR 30 2021**

RE: S.R. No. 71  
S.D. 1

Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi  
President of the Senate  
Thirty-First State Legislature  
Regular Session of 2021  
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committee on Agriculture and Environment, to which was referred S.R. No. 71 entitled:

"SENATE RESOLUTION REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE TO CONSIDER AMENDING THE ELIGIBILITY QUALIFICATIONS AND LEASE TERMS FOR ITS AGRICULTURAL LOTS TO AID SMALL FARM BUSINESSES, "

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose and intent of this measure is to request the Department of Agriculture to consider amending its eligibility qualifications and lease terms for its agricultural lots to aid small farm businesses.

Your Committee received testimony in support of this measure from two individuals. Your Committee received comments on this measure from the Department of Agriculture.

Your Committee finds that Hawaii farmers are facing difficulty in obtaining long-term leases and reasonable lease rents because there is pressure on the use of important agricultural land for higher value purposes, resulting in accelerated decline near urban areas due to farmers' disinvestment in their farm operations in anticipation of development. Because lease rents for lands under the Department of Agriculture are lower than privately owned lands, small farmers are attracted to rent lands from the State. However, farmers have had difficulty



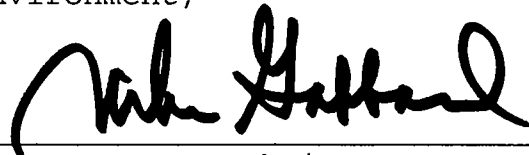
in meeting bona fide farmer requirements to qualify to lease state lands.

Your Committee also finds that one of the Department of Agriculture's significant challenges for issuing new leases to new and small farming operations is the lack of high quality, vacant farmlands, even though there are qualified bona fide and new farmers applying for desirable parcels. The Department of Agriculture remains amenable to revisiting its current standards for qualifications to lease state farmlands to ensure that it adjusts for and incorporates any changes in agriculture. The initial establishment of the bona fide farmer eligibility requirements to lease state land were established to ensure state agricultural land assets would remain in productive agricultural uses rather than possibly be abused as a vehicle for acquiring inexpensive lands for residential use with minimal farming occurring on the premises. The Department of Agriculture stated that it does not believe modifying the lease qualifications is necessary to improve its ability to fill vacant lands with new small farmers.

Your Committee has amended this measure by making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity and consistency.

As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on Agriculture and Environment that is attached to this report, your Committee concurs with the intent and purpose of S.R. No. 71, as amended herein, and recommends its adoption in the form attached hereto as S.R. No. 71, S.D. 1.

Respectfully submitted on  
behalf of the members of the  
Committee on Agriculture and  
Environment,



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MIKE GABBARD, Chair



