



The Senate

STATE CAPITOL
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

SENATOR MALAMA SOLOMON, Ph.D.

March 17, 2014

TO: Senator Clarence Nishihara
Chair, Senate Committee on Agriculture

SUBJECT: Testimony in Support
Mr. Richard Ha
Nominee to the Board of Agriculture

Aloha Kakou:

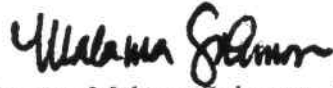
I have known Richard Ha for many years and I speak in strong support of his nomination to the Board of Agriculture. Richard Ha is an outstanding farmer and approaches Agriculture from a holistic point of view.

The challenges that face the agricultural business in Hawai'i are daunting. This is why we need Richard Ha's leadership. His community involvement has given him in-depth knowledge of how the government, public, and private sectors cooperation is necessary so we can decrease our dependency on imported food and increase our local food production. In fact, if we were able to increase our local food production by 10 percent, two hundred million dollars plus would remain in our local economy.

Richard Ha's willingness to serve has caused him to suffer unwarranted insults from a Senator of this body, publicly and privately. I have attached the Hawaii Tribune Herald article dated March 22, 2014 which quotes the Senator "If any of you share my revulsion at Richard Ha being appointed to the State Ag Board, it's not too late to do something." These falsehoods have targeted Mr. Ha's pro-active positions and his strong avocation for the furtherance of geothermal energy development on the Island of Hawai'i. Why, these negative remarks? Because geothermal energy development would reduce the electricity costs substantially, this is a key to accelerate local food production within our state.

I strongly support Richard Ha's nomination, he is a resident of my 4th Senatorial district and I will continue to work with him to bring about positive solutions that will increase our local food production on the Island of Hawai'i and throughout the State.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Malama Solomon". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Senator Malama Solomon, Ph.D.

4th Senatorial District

(Hilo, Hāmākua, Kohala, Waimea, Waikoloa, Kona)

Ruderman fights Ha's ag appointment

March 22, 2014 - 1:01am

By TOM CALLIS Tribune-Herald staff writer

A Big Island state senator has started an email campaign seeking to stop colleagues from reappointing Richard Ha to the state Board of Agriculture.

"If any of you share my revulsion at Richard Ha being appointed to the State Ag Board, it's not too late to do something," Sen. Russell Ruderman said in the email sent March 13 on his personal account.

Ha, owner of Hamakua Springs Country Farms, has been at odds with Ruderman over issues of genetically modified crops and geothermal energy. Ha also criticized Ruderman in Hawaii media for supporting legislation against transgenic food, known commonly as genetically modified organisms, or GMOs, while owning natural food stores on the Big Island.

In the email, Ruderman, D-Puna, touched on those issues.

"Mr. Ha is pro-GMO, pro-geothermal and tried to accuse me of conflict of interest for speaking out," he said.

"Please spread the word. If each senator gets 100 emails in opposition this will not fly."

Ruderman, who owns Island Naturals, told the Tribune-Herald the email was intended for those with "concerns about his appointment." He said he did not expect the email to be seen by the general public and was not ready to make a statement on the issue.

"I think I'm shooting myself in the foot by saying anything at this point and time," he said.

But Ruderman added the email was not about a "personal vendetta or the way he attacked me publicly."

Ha, who has been the Big Island's representative on the board for one term, said he was surprised to hear about the email.

"Sen. Ruderman is so determined, he's so anti-GMO that he's losing all sense of perspective to me," he said.

Ha characterized his stance on genetically altered crops as "pro-science" and said his views on the issue should not disqualify him for the position.

"I'll go where the science takes me," said Ha. "If GMO is not supported by science, I'd change."

While a supporter of genetically modified agriculture, Ha does not grow transgenic crops.

Ha, who addresses issues of food security and energy on his blog, is a founding member of the pro-GMO Hawaii Farmers and Ranchers United.

Gov. Neil Abercrombie nominated Ha for reappointment to the board.

Ha said his term ends in June. If reappointed, his term would last until June 30, 2018.

The Senate must approve the nomination, which the Senate Committee on Agriculture will first consider.

A staff member for Sen. Clarence Nishihara, the committee's chairman, said the office has received emails opposing Ha's nomination but they cannot be considered as testimony since the matter has not been scheduled for a hearing.

Email Tom Callis at tcallis@hawaiitribune-herald.com.