

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR
STATE OF HAWAII

JOSH GREEN
LT. GOVERNOR
STATE OF HAWAII



WILLIAM J. AILA, JR.
CHAIRMAN
HAWAIIAN HOMES COMMISSION

TYLER I. GOMES
DEPUTY TO THE CHAIRMAN

**STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HAWAIIAN HOME LANDS**

P. O. BOX 1879
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96805

TESTIMONY OF WILLIAM J. AILA, JR, CHAIRMAN
HAWAIIAN HOMES COMMISSION
BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS
HEARING ON MARCH 3, 2021 AT 2:00PM VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

HB 756, HD1, RELATING TO THE BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

March 3, 2021

Aloha Chair Nakashima, Vice Chair Matayoshi, and members of the Committee:

The Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL) strongly supports this bill which redesignates one of the at-large positions on the Board of Agriculture as an ex officio position, to be filled by the Chairperson of the Hawaiian Homes Commission. The Hawaiian Homes Commission approved a similar measure, but it was not included in the Governor's administrative package.

DHHL supports either the original version of this bill or the House Draft 1. The original version of the bill would allow for an odd number of board members. The House Draft 1 of the bill attempted to address concerns raised by the Department of Agriculture.

The Hawaii Department of Agriculture headed by the Board of Agriculture works to support, enhance, promote, and protect Hawaii's agriculture and aquaculture industries. The Hawaiian Homes Commission Act authorizes DHHL to lease agricultural lands or lands used for aquaculture purposes. As the State looks to increase food security across the State, the interests of agricultural homestead lessees should be represented on the Board of Agriculture.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony.

DAVID Y. IGE
Governor

JOSH GREEN
Lt. Governor



PHYLLIS SHIMABUKURO-GEISER
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

MORRIS M. ATTA
Deputy to the Chairperson

State of Hawaii
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
1428 South King Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96814-2512
Phone: (808) 973-9600 FAX: (808) 973-9613

**TESTIMONY OF PHYLLIS SHIMABUKURO-GEISER
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

**MARCH 3, 2021
2:00 P.M.
VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE**

**HOUSE BILL NO. 756 HD1
RELATING TO THE BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

Chairperson Nakashima and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill No. 756 HD1. This measure redesignates one of the at-large positions on the board of agriculture ("Board") as an ex officio position, to be filled by the chairperson of the Hawaiian homes commission ("DHHL Chairperson"). The Department of Agriculture ("Department") offers the following comments.

The Department has concerns regarding expanding the Board to accommodate requests of specific stakeholder groups seeking additional representation on the Board. This measure adds the DHHL Chairperson to the Board to represent the interests of agricultural homestead lessees. The agricultural homestead lessees on Department of Hawaiian Homes Lands ("DHHL") are a relatively small subset of the estimated 7,328 farming operations in the State.

Currently, the Board consists of members that provide geographic representation for the counties of Hawaii, Maui, and Kauai, at-large members for stakeholder representation, and ex-officio members that ensure input regarding the State's interest in supporting and promoting land, water, economic development, and industry standards and education agriculture. Together with the Chairperson of the Board, the Board provides effective board governance for the Department.

Boards for state agencies are legislatively created to provide policy insight and oversight by subject matter experts and representatives of important stakeholder



communities. The number of members is an important consideration to optimize and ensure fair, efficient decision making and a smaller board size is favored to mitigate against the potential for inaction due to decision making inefficiencies or gridlock. Ordinarily, expansion of membership on boards overseeing government agencies is appropriate when such addition significantly enhances and contributes to the board's ability to provide policy guidance to enable the Department to accomplish its mission and core responsibilities.

Adding the DHHL Chairperson as an additional ex-officio member increases the total number of board members and creates a precedence and opportunity for others stakeholder groups to request further expansion of the Board and compromise its ability to govern efficiently. If this Committee is inclined to move this measure, the Department believes that re-designating one of the existing at-large positions for the stakeholder-oriented representation on the Board sought by DHHL may be a more appropriate approach rather than creating a new ex-officio one.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.


OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS
‘Ōlelo Hō‘ike ‘Aha Kau Kānāwai
Legislative Testimony

HB756 HD1
RELATING TO THE BOARD OF AGRICULTURE
Ke Kōmike Hale o ka Ho‘okolokolo a me ke Kuleana Hawai‘i
House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs

Malaki 3, 2021

2:00 p.m.

Lumi 325

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS** HB756 HD1, which would add the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL) chairperson as an “ex officio” voting member to the Board of Agriculture (Board). Allowing DHHL a seat on the Board will provide needed representation for native Hawaiian agricultural beneficiaries as an important part of Hawai‘i’s growing small-scale agricultural community.

DHHL’s unique mission, purpose, and activities will provide the Board with a valuable and important perspective that may benefit both DHHL agricultural lessees as well as our islands as a whole. DHHL began with agricultural homesteads on Moloka‘i, and facilitating agricultural homesteading continues to be a major part of DHHL’s mission to enable native Hawaiians’ return to the land: DHHL currently represents the interests of 16,470 agricultural beneficiaries and 43,569 acres of agricultural lands.^{1,2} DHHL’s Agricultural Program Plan also seeks to increase the issuance of agricultural homestead lots for lessees.³ HB756 HD1 will therefore provide a needed voice on the Board for DHHL as a major and long-standing stakeholder in our islands’ agriculture landscape, to ensure that the interests of its beneficiaries are adequately considered, and to facilitate their contribution to our islands’ economic resilience and food self-sufficiency.

Accordingly, OHA urges the Committee to **PASS** HB756 HD1. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

¹ Department of Hawaiian Home Lands, FOR INFORMATION ONLY—DHHL AGRICULTURAL PROGRAM PLAN SURVEY RESULTS 6 (2021).

² Department of Hawaiian Home Lands, Island Plans, available at <https://dhhl.hawaii.gov/po/island-plans/> (last accessed Mar. 2, 2021).

³ Department of Hawaiian Home Lands, Agricultural Program Plan, available at <https://dhhl.hawaii.gov/po/program-plans/agriculture-program-plan/> (last accessed Mar. 2, 2021).