

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 THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

FEBRUARY 1, 2021
1:00 P.M.
VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

SENATE BILL NO. 341
RELATING TO TARO

Chairperson Gabbard and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on Senate Bill 341. This bill establishes an exemption from state income tax for the first \$100,000 of income derived from taro, taro products, and land used to produce taro if the total amount of land used to cultivate taro in Hawaii does not exceed thirty thousand acres at any point in the year. The Department of Agriculture supports the intent of the bill to reduce the tax liability for taro farmers and value-added producers, defers to the Department of Taxation with respect to the proposed amendments to Chapter 235, and offers comments.

Food production in Hawaii impacts all farmers, ranchers, and producers statewide with the high cost of farming inputs, including land, water, labor, and energy. Both the Administration and the Legislature have expressed strong support to increase local food self-sufficiency. We believe this effort to increase income to taro farmers would align better with the priority to increase food self-sufficiency by extending the proposed exclusion from income tax to all agricultural producers and the agricultural products they produce across the State.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR

JOSH GREEN M.D.
LT. GOVERNOR



ISAAC W. CHOY
DIRECTOR OF TAXATION

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF TAXATION
P.O. BOX 259
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809
PHONE NO: (808) 587-1540
FAX NO: (808) 587-1560

To: The Honorable Mike Gabbard, Chair;
The Honorable Clarence K. Nishihara, Vice Chair;
and Members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment

From: Isaac W. Choy, Director
Department of Taxation

Date: February 1, 2021
Time: 1:00 P.M.
Place: Via Videoconference, Hawaii State Capitol

Re: S.B. 341, Relating to Taro

The Department of Taxation (Department) offers the following comments regarding S.B. 341 for your consideration.

S.B. 341 adds a new section to chapter 235, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), to establish a new tax credit for “persons engaged in the business of taro cultivation and production of value-added taro products,” and exempt the following categories from taxation:

- (1) Taro plants; taro corm; leaf; and huli for taro farms or portions of farms dedicated to taro plants, taro corm, leaf, and huli;
- (2) Taro lands planted with taro, including fallow rotation lands specifically for taro production of less than or equal acreage to lands in active taro production by each individual grower; and
- (3) Preparations of taro, poi, and value-added products produced with taro exclusively sourced from taro grown in the State.

The proposed exemption would make nontaxable the first \$100,000 of gross income per individual, farm, poi mill, or business, but persons in the business of taro production will lose the exclusion if and when the Department of Agriculture determines that “at any time during the year the total amount of land for locally grown taro in the State surpasses thirty thousand acres[.]” The measure applies to taxable years beginning after December 31, 2020.

First, the Department notes that the Department lacks the knowledge and expertise necessary to administer significant portions of this tax exemption as drafted. For example, the

measure does not define “poi mill,” “taro corm,” or “taro huli,” all terms which need to be properly understood in order to administer the exemption. Similarly, the Department lacks the ability to verify compliance with some of the exemption’s requirements, such as the requirement in subsection 2 of Section 2 that taro lands restrict their portion of fallow rotation lands to less than or equal acreage to lands in active taro production in order to qualify for the exemption. Moreover, the language in Section 2, subsection 3, restricting the credit’s applicability to preparations “produced with taro exclusively sourced from taro grown in the State” may create an issue under the Commerce Clause of the U.S. Constitution.

Second, the Department notes that the exemption as drafted is extremely broad. As currently written, there is no restriction on the type of income that would be exempted under the measure. The Department recommends amending this measure to include additional definitions, criteria, and restrictions for the proposed exemption to better effectuate the Legislature’s desired policy goals, eliminate major administrative difficulties, and avoid unintended revenue losses.

Third, the Department notes that the bill as currently drafted could be simplified as there appears to be some contradiction between “exemption” and “exclusion.” As drafted, the language at the beginning of Section 2 broadly states that “persons engaged in the business of taro cultivation and production and production of value-added taro products shall not be taxable” under chapter 235, followed by further language stating up to \$100,000 of gross income “shall not be taxable” under chapter 235, followed by language that essentially negates these two exemptions in the event that the State reaches a threshold in which *too* much land is being used for taro. The Committee may wish to consider amending the proposed bill to simply state that the first \$100,000 of a person’s income from the business of taro cultivation or production is excluded from their gross income for Hawaii income tax purposes, provided that the DOA makes its 30,000 acre threshold determination.

Finally, notwithstanding the comments discussed above, the Department is able to administer the measure with its current effective date.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.



**WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
THIRTY-FIRST LEGISLATURE, 2021**

ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:
S.B. NO. 341, RELATING TO TARO.

BEFORE THE:

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

DATE: Monday, February 1, 2021 **TIME:** 1:00 p.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Via Videoconference

TESTIFIER(S): **WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY.**
(For more information, contact Janine R. Udui,
Deputy Attorney General, at (808) 586-1470)

Chair Gabbard and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Attorney General has concerns regarding this bill and provides the following comments.

The purpose of this bill, as stated on page 4, lines 15-18, is to “create stronger economic incentives for new taro farmers, improve the livelihoods of existing taro farmers, and reduce the cost of poi for local families by exempting taro production from state income taxes.” Toward this end, this bill adds a new section to chapter 235, Hawaii Revised Statutes, that provides on page 5, lines 1-7, an exemption from income taxes for “persons engaged in the business of taro cultivation and production of value-added taro products.” Persons engaged in the business of taro cultivation and production of value-added taro products are eligible for this income tax exemption for, among other things, “[p]reparations of taro, poi, and value-added products produced with taro exclusively sourced from taro grown in the State” as stated on page 5, lines 18-20, of the bill.

This requirement that the tax exemption be limited to preparations of taro, poi, and value-added taro products exclusively made from taro “grown in the State” could be subject to challenge as a violation of the Commerce Clause of the United States Constitution.

The Commerce Clause provides that Congress shall have the power to “regulate Commerce . . . among the several States.” U.S. Const. art I, § 8, ct. 3. “Though phrased as a grant of regulatory power to Congress, the clause has long been understood to have a ‘negative’ aspect that denies the States the power unjustifiably to discriminate against or burden the interstate flow of articles in commerce.” *Oregon Waste Systems, Inc. v. Dep’t of Env’tl. Quality*, 511 U.S. 93, 98, 114 S. Ct. 1345, 1349 (1994). This implicit constitutional restriction upon the States has become known as the “negative” or “dormant” Commerce Clause doctrine. See *Rocky Mountain Farmers Union v. Corey*, 730 F.3d 1070, 1087 (9th Cir. 2013). The doctrine prohibits States from “advancing their own commercial interests by curtailing the movement of articles of commerce, either into or out of the state,” *Fort Gratiot Sanitary Landfill, Inc. v. Michigan Dep’t of Natural Resources*, 504 U.S. 353, 112 S. Ct. 2019 (1992) (internal brackets omitted), upon concern about “economic protectionism,” *i.e.*, “regulatory measures designed to benefit in-state economic interests by burdening out-of-state competitors.” *Department of Revenue of Ky. v. Davis*, 553 U.S. 328, 337, 128 S. Ct. 1801, 1808 (2008). For example, in *Bacchus Imports Ltd. v. Dias*, 468 U.S. 263 (1984), the United States Supreme Court struck down an exemption from the liquor tax for sales of okolehau and fruit wine brewed in Hawaii from locally grown products upon finding that the exemption bestowed a commercial advantage on locally produced products.

With this bill, persons engaged in the production and sale of value-added taro products would get the tax exemption if their taro products are made exclusively with taro grown in Hawaii. The same tax exemption would not be available to producers selling value-added taro products made with taro grown outside of Hawaii. Similar to the situation in *Bacchus*, the proposed tax exemption may be challenged as unconstitutional because it bestows a commercial advantage on locally produced taro insofar as the exemption encourages and incentivizes the purchase and use of locally produced taro over taro cultivated outside of the State. Thus, the bill is subject to challenge under the Commerce Clause because it has “both the purpose and effect of discriminating in favor of local products.” *Bacchus*, 468 U.S. 263, 273.

Based on the foregoing, we respectfully ask that these concerns be addressed. One way to do so is to remove the requirement that preparations of taro, poi, and value-added taro products be produced from taro exclusively grown in Hawaii. This would address the possible Commerce Clause challenge by allowing the tax exemption to apply equally to all producers of value-added taro products, regardless of where the taro is sourced from.

Further, there is an apparent conflict with the wording of the proposed new statutory section. On page 5, lines 4-7, of the bill, the new section provides that "persons engaged in the business of taro cultivation and production of value-added taro products shall not be taxable under this chapter." However, the proviso on page 6, lines 1-3, states, "provided that up to the first \$100,000 of gross income per individual, farm, poi mill, or business shall not be taxable under this chapter[,]" which in effect makes gross income above \$100,000 subject to income tax. If the intent is for the exemption to apply only to the first \$100,000 of gross income, then the conflict would be cured by stating this in the opening paragraph on page 5, line 4, as follows, "persons engaged in the business of taro cultivation and production of value-added taro products shall not be taxable up to the first \$100,000 of gross income per individual, farm, poi mill, or business." The proviso on page 6, lines 1-3, would then not be needed and the wording "provided that up to the first \$100,000 of gross income per individual, farm, poi mill, or business shall not be taxable under this chapter;" should be deleted, along with the word "further" on page 6, line 3, in the second proviso.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.

TAX FOUNDATION OF HAWAII

126 Queen Street, Suite 304

Honolulu, Hawaii 96813 Tel. 536-4587

SUBJECT: INCOME, Exemption for Taro, Taro Products, and Associated Land

BILL NUMBER: SB 341

INTRODUCED BY: GABBARD, INOUE, KANUHA, KEITH-AGARAN, KIM, LEE, RIVIERE, SHIMABUKURO, Chang, Ihara, Kidani, Misalucha, San Buenaventura

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Establishes an exemption from state income tax for the first \$100,000 of income derived from taro, taro products, and land used to produce taro if the total amount of land used to cultivate taro in Hawaii does not exceed thirty thousand acres at any point in the year.

SYNOPSIS: Adds a new section to chapter 235, HRS, providing that the following shall not be taxable under the Income Tax Law, except for payroll withholding tax and unrelated business income tax: (1) Taro plants; taro corm; leaf; and huli for taro farms or portions of farms dedicated to taro plants, taro corm, leaf, and huli; (2) Taro lands planted with taro, including fallow rotation lands specifically for taro production of less than or equal acreage to lands in active taro production by each individual grower; and (3) Preparations of taro, poi, and value-added products produced with taro exclusively sourced from taro grown in the State. Provides that up to the first \$100,000 of gross income per individual, farm, or poi mill shall not be taxable under this chapter; provided further that this exclusion shall not apply if at any time during the year the total amount of land for locally grown taro in the State surpasses thirty thousand acres, as determined by the department of land and natural resources.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Taxable years beginning after 12/31/2020.

STAFF COMMENTS: This measure proposes incentives under the income tax to encourage the production of taro in the state.

The use of the tax system to provide financial assistance in the form of preferential tax treatment under the income tax is an inefficient use of the tax system. This preferential treatment proposed in this measure amounts to nothing more than a subsidy as there is no obvious undue burden of taxes. If this measure is enacted, it will provide one industry with preferential treatment. That is bad tax policy.

This measure proposes an exclusion of income from the net income tax. It should be remembered, companies only pay taxes when they make a profit, that is income is greater than expenditures. As such, this bill rewards a company for making profits while all other businesses that make profits must pay the income tax. If this operation were not profitable, then income tax would not apply. It would only seem fair that some of the profits made by the company go to pay for the public services provided to that business and its employees. Further, it should be noted that by exempting the business from the state income tax on its profits, it exposes more of those profits to the federal income tax where the rates are much higher. (State income taxes are

deductible by a business without limit.) Thus, in the end, this exemption would end up sending more tax dollars to Washington.

Giving tax breaks to one select group of taxpayers comes at the expense of all other taxpayers. Rather than singling out a particular area for tax relief, concurrent efforts must be made to improve Hawaii's business climate to enhance the economic prospects for all businesses.

It should also be noted that an income exclusion affects taxpayers differently depending on the amount of net income they otherwise have. For example, a \$50,000 income exclusion would create a maximum \$5,500 tax benefit to an individual making over \$200,000 in adjusted gross income, where the same individual with \$35,000 adjusted gross income and \$15,000 net profit would see a benefit of perhaps \$725.

If lawmakers want to subsidize this specific project, then an appropriation of funds is far more accountable as taxpayers will then know who is to receive the subsidy, how much is being spent and then they can judge whether or not this is an appropriate use of state taxpayer dollars.

Technical issues remain to be addressed.

- The bill excludes the first \$100,000 of gross income, but the income tax is imposed on net income. Under normal tax rules (IRC section 265 as operative in Hawaii), expenses associated with exempt income are not deductible so taxpayers can't double dip. Lawmakers should make sure that this result is intended, especially because the description of the exemption is of tangible objects and not income.
- If the taro acreage passes 30,000 acres at any time during the year, the exclusion is disallowed for everyone, which may dash settled expectations that farmers had been relying upon when planning their plantings.

Digested 1/29/2021

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/29/2021 3:42:52 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Ku Kahakalau, Ph.D.	Testifying for Ku-A-Kanaka LLC	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha. We are a family of native Hawaiian educators, social entrepreneurs and cultural practitioners growing taro for over three decades in Waipi'o Valley on Hawai'i Island. In 2019 we signed a 5-acre lease with Bishop Museum to grow taro for family consumption and to generate income for our social enterprise KÅ«-A-Kanaka, which is the fiscal sponsor of EA Ecovercity, a native Hawaiian post-secondary higher education and career training program. Already it has cost us of over \$ 35,000 to clear and fence the land and create taro patches. This bill will help small scale taro growers like ourselves to be exempt from state income tax for the first \$100,000 of income derived from taro and taro products. We urge you to please support this bill. Mahalo nui. KÅ« Kahakalau, Ph.D.



Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment

Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action Supports: SB 341

Monday, February 1st, 2021 1:00 p.m.

Aloha Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Nishihara and Members of the Committee,

HAPA strongly supports SB 341. Taro is one of the most culturally significant food crops in Hawai'i and one of the healthiest staple starch foods available. It is also a valued landscape and is recognized as the State Plant. Taro farmers need and deserve support to ensure taro farming continues to grow and expand into the future. This measure helps to incentivize farmers' to grow taro.

Taro lands provide ecological and environmental buffers against flooding. Taro lands are intricately connected to the protection of our riparian areas, coastal wetlands, and fishponds. Taro lands are celebrated as important and sacred places in Hawaiian traditions and stories and often farmed by families for generations.

Unfortunately, taro farms are typically rural and located on some of the most beautiful lands in our state. As such they have become desirable to the real estate market. Every year, we see increased development encroaching on taro growing communities.

The result has been significant increases in tax assessments for taro lands from the counties, as well as excessive lease rates from DLNR. If a taro farmer can't afford to pay the taxes for their property and live on their own lands there are few places left for them to continue to farm.

This is a very concerning and important issue for us to address this legislative session, not just for the above reasons, but also because taro lands are some of our most productive agricultural lands and they have never been needed so much. This past year the COVID-19 crisis has reminded us all how important it is to urgently grow our food security. By encouraging more people to grow and produce taro we can help increase local food self-sufficiency and help Hawai'i reach its food security goals.

By exempting taro production from state income taxes SB 341 will improve the economic landscape for taro farmers' as well their ability to overcome financial barriers and setbacks.

SB 341 will provide relief to taro growers from the heavy burden of increasing land tax rates. Tax relief of this nature helps create resources that enable farms to reinvest in their farm and offer more opportunities for the next generation of taro farmers'.

SB 341 is a great way to support a native Hawaiian cultural practice and Hawai'i's staple food. Supporting taro farming and assisting farmers' will also help to keep native Hawaiian traditions alive.

SB 341 will create economic incentives for taro farmers' and could reduce the cost of poi for local families. In doing so, this measure could help make taro more widely accessible and enable Hawaiian families to reconnect with this culturally important food source.

Please support SB 341 to help grow our local food economy.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne Frederick', written in a cursive style.

Anne Frederick
Executive Director



1050 Bishop St. PMB 235 | Honolulu, HI 96813
P: 808-533-1292 | e: info@hawaiiifood.com

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*
John Schlif, Rainbow Sales and Marketing, *Advisor*
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 Clarence K. Nishihara, Vice Chair

FROM: HAWAII FOOD INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION
Lauren Zirbel, Executive Director

DATE: February 1, 2021
TIME: 1pm
PLACE: Via Videoconference

RE: SB341 Relating to Taro

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.

Taro is a nutritious and versatile staple crop that can be sustainably cultivated here in Hawaii. It also has important cultural and historic significance in our state. This tax credit is an investment in the future of Hawaii's taro farmers and a way to make taro more accessible for Hawaii consumers. Taro has long been recognized as a "superfood" because of its high content of beneficial vitamins, minerals, and fiber. In recent years taro is regaining popularity and several Hawaii food companies make a range of taro products. Increasing taro production is a way to support taro farmers and taro product manufacturers. Promoting local food production also means better food self-sufficiency and greater resiliency for our state. We encourage you to pass this measure and we thank you for the opportunity to testify.



P.O. Box 253, Kunia, Hawai'i 96759
Phone: (808) 848-2074; Fax: (808) 848-1921
e-mail info@hfbf.org; www.hfbf.org

February 1, 2021

HEARING BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

TESTIMONY ON SB 341
RELATING TO TARO

Videoconference
1:00 PM

Aloha Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Nishihara, and Members of the Committee:

I am Brian Miyamoto, Executive Director of the Hawaii Farm Bureau (HFB). Organized since 1948, the HFB is comprised of 1,800 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 supports SB 341, which establishes an exemption from state income tax for the first \$100,000 of income derived from taro, taro products, and land used to produce taro if the total amount of land used to cultivate taro in Hawaii does not exceed thirty thousand acres at any point in the year

The Hawaii Farm Bureau recognizes taro's importance in Hawaii's cultural identity and role in local food security. This measure is aimed to assist taro farmers in their efforts to increase their production and viability. We support this effort to improve the taro farmer's ability to not only sustain themselves but also to expand their long term success.

HFB supports any initiative that reduces the cost of production so that locally produced goods can compete with imported products, strengthening our local economy.

Hawaii Farm Bureau Policy states:

"State tax and monetary policies should be designed to encourage private initiative to help stabilize farm economics in the State of Hawaii, to promote employment and economic growth and to distribute the tax burden equitably. Further such policy should be used by the state, when appropriate, to encourage agricultural growth and expansion."

HFB supports SB 341 which is an investment in Hawaii's taro farmers.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of this measure.

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/31/2021 12:38:54 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Hunter Heavilin	Testifying for Supersistence	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Nishihara, and Members of the Committee on Agriculture and Environment,

Kalo has sustained the Hawaiian islands for generations and the support for its production in SB341 is a long overdue means to unencumber cultural practices, enhance agricultural development, and increase availability of this staple crop.

SB341 is an important means to support statewide goals to increase both local food production and consumption. Having worked lo'i and at a poi mill I support this bill as a means for farmers and value-added operations to retain as much of their hard-earned incomes as possible. As a food system planner with a moderate poi habit **I strongly support SB341** as a means to lower the cost of accessing Hawai'i's staple. Access to culturally appropriate foods is a key facet of food security, and there is no crop better suited for this type of support than kalo.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

-Hunter Heavilin

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/31/2021 12:56:15 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Kelsey Amos	Testifying for Food+ Policy Internship	Support	No

Comments:

This testimony is submitted by the Food+ Policy 2021 Interns. We support this bill because it would support small taro farmers around the state and contribute to Hawaiian cultural resurgence and food security.

The Food+ Policy internship is a program for college students to learn work skills and advocacy and increase civic engagement to become emerging leaders. We focus on good food systems policy because we see the importance and potential of the food system in combating climate change and increasing the health, equity, and resiliency of Hawai'i communities.

In 2021, the pilot cohort of interns comes from the University of Hawai'i West O'ahu. They are juniors, seniors, and graduates of the Sustainable Community Food Systems program. They are a mix of nontraditional and traditional students, including parents and veterans, from west and leeward O'ahu, who have backgrounds in education, farming, and Hawaiian culture.

Please see below personal testimony from one of the interns, a Native Hawaiian woman and farmer.

Aloha, my name is Andreanna Kaluhiokalani. I am a senior at the University of Hawaii West Oahu. I am bringing with me all the ancestors of the past to present this testimony.

Growing up I was disconnected from the aina. But mostly disconnected with my heritage and overall connection with my genealogy. It was in my first beginning stages of my community college years where my personal insight on Kanaka and interconnection to land had overall changed. I was exposed to another level of understanding and felt the true embracing of my Hawaiian culture. I was further challenged to understand the traditional ways of farming and land management practices. I confronted my limited beliefs and engaged in challenging myself to understand the knowledge that was there. I challenged myself to be more engaged in the ways of a Kanaka and that is respecting and knowing my elders. It was a challenge that presented itself to me that I felt it is my kuleana or responsibility/interest to pursue farming of any kind. It is my responsibility to

connect the knowledge I have gained from the past to keep the knowledge of the future flowing.

I decided to make a change and be the first in my family in 3 generations to start farming again. I started off small collaborating with local community efforts such as Go Farm Hawaii, and MA'O organic farm. I decided that I will respect the efforts made by my ancestors and get more acquainted with kalo. Learning the types of kalo farming, infrastructure and overall effort it takes to produce this life staple. Being open to the knowledge that was embedded in my ancestral lineage. Then while studying my prerequisites at Leeward Community College I took classes such as horticulture and botany to further my education and interest in sustainable farming. Fast forward, I am now a senior obtaining a double major in Sustainable Community Food Systems and Political Science. I also gained two years of experience, farming sustainably at the Student Organic Garden on Campus. In doing all of these things I decided to familiarize myself with native plants, similar community efforts, overall community involvement. Bill SB341 will further help my community because it will provide the necessary incentives that kalo farmers need. Bill SB41 will help me because it will make large kalo production more efficient and appealing to further engage in farming.

By making a change in my life it has affected how farming is viewed within my family. It has fused the traditional ways of our ancestors back to our generation. It has led me to almost completing my degree. It has led me to a Food policy internship that is a stepping stone to my future goals. It has led me to continue my education to pursue a law degree in Native Hawaiian Law. It has led me to a path that is very fulfilling and aligned.

Now I challenge the committee, (individually, collectively) to demand the change that we desire. I challenge you to share your story of your disconnected past and your fulfilling future. I challenge you to support bill SB341. Be the change that needs to happen in order to break the generational barriers we face. I challenge you to be an active agent of change.

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/31/2021 1:16:05 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Jeri Di Pietro	Testifying for Hawai'i SEED	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Senate Committee Members of Agriculture and Environment,

We strongly SUPPORT SB 341 relating to Taro to establish a tax exemption for income derived from sales of Kalo/Taro, Taro products, and the land used to cultivate Taro, when the land acreage does not exceed 30,000 acres at any point in the year.

This important legislation shows the importance of supporting traditional indigenous food production. We recognize the importance to support local food farming, especially Kalo. We know the critical nature of food security and abundant access to healthy foods during this time. Taro cultivation is perhaps the most culturally significant part of our history, landscape and communities.

Mahalo for supporting this important step for farmers,

Sincerely,

Jeri Di Pietro, President

Hawai'i SEED

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/29/2021 9:42:24 AM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
mikala minn	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Mikala Minn and I farm in East Maui, as part of a 7-acre non-profit farm called Mahele Farm, and individually--these are my personal views. Given the obstacles to farm, in particular the insurmountable land prices, for average working class residents, this bill represents some relief. Food security is more important than ever, and kalo in my community made a huge difference in riding out the closures of COVID 19. I encourage the state to look at this as a way to make it possible for honest, hard-working people to make a living farming--currently kalo farming, profits and losses combined, does not net anywhere near the cost of land and living in Hawai'i. This bill is a start. The sale of kalo, poi and luau are not lucrative, especially when considering the expenses business expenses (including taxes) and the competition--subsidized, imported food alternatives (mostly processed) that are filling stores' shelves. Kalo farming is beneficial to our islands soil health, and our people's health, and we need your help to eliminate the barriers to honest farming, and combat erosion on our islands. This bill would encourage locals to enter into the markets, and make known the real potential of our kalo farming, as opposed to informal exchange of kalo, and subsistence. Our state's goals of increasing food security by the end of this decade would be greatly helped through this bill. Mahalo nui for your support.

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/29/2021 10:28:36 AM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
cheryl B.	Individual	Comments	No

Comments:

My comments are that any way that we can support our local taro growers (or other farmers) we should be doing so! Our islands need to move towards sustaining ourselves.

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/29/2021 5:28:18 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Tom Wiedenbein	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Dear Legislators,

Taro is a critical crop in Hawai'i, with countless lo'i spread across the islands. Native Hawaiian religious practices highlight its importance, and it has been a crop cultivated within the islands for hundreds of years. Taro's cultural impact is undeniable. It has its place in local cuisine, as well as the cuisines of many of the islands around the Pacific. For me, as somebody who suffers from a medical condition that requires that I do not eat gluten, taro is a local starch that is extremely nutritious.

Hawai'i's food security depends on local farmers to be able to grow produce locally and be price-competitive with imports. If farmers are granted income tax exemptions for small-scale taro operations, it will encourage more farmers to grow taro. This, in turn, will continue to lower the prices of taro and make it more accessible to people across Hawai'i. The more local food that is produced, the more resilient we will be to any kind of supply chain disruptions like ones that were feared toward the start of the COVID pandemic.

For these reasons, I support SB314, and encourage your support as well.

Tom Wiedenbein

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/29/2021 6:18:40 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Ashley Gutierrez	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

To whom it may concern,

I was born and raised in Hanalei Valley (Halelea, Kaua'i), home of the Scenic Kalo fields. Over these past few years, Kalo fields and farmers have been devastated by floods. In 2018 Hanalei has seen a record breaking 50 inches in a 48 hour period, causing major damages and problems with the irrigation to the loi. Lots of loss profits. During 2020 summer months water was low, due to the river bypassing the intake to the fields because of river breaks from floods. More loss profits. They suffered through major loss, during Co-vid no less. I believe they are in need of a break. I can personally attest that these are hard working people with little means to keep their families going. You would crush their spirits to even be a loi farmer charging them with extra payments., I see that as a sign of genocide.

Kalo is the future of our economy. Tourism is not returning, less and less barges are coming in. Our people will turn to these crops/farmers to save us from brink of starvation and economic collapse. You should help the people that are keeping the dream alive. My ancestors left these lands to the people for the purposes of loi farming, not to make America money.

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/30/2021 8:09:14 AM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Daniel Bishop	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am in strong support of SB341

I am a small farmer of native Hawaiian decent who leases 5 acres of remnant ancient loi lands. The cultural and nutritional value of the organic taro that we grow far outweighs the economic return, yet the costs to farm taro are equal to growing other crops of higher cash value with lower food (nutritional) value.

A tax incentive would help reduce our costs and keep some of our hard earned cash in our own pockets ,which we would inturn circulate back into the economy.

Mahalo

Danny Bishop

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/30/2021 12:56:38 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Dylan Ramos	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha,

Whether we're talking about food sovereignty, food security, supporting farmers, economic diversification, public health, Hawaiian rights, racial equity, or resourceful land use, the initiative found in this bill is an encouraging change of pace. My only hope is that this or an accompanying bill will further incentivize and/or protect and promote kalo cultivation specifically carried out by Native Hawaiians and Hawaiian-owned businesses. It would be a shameful outcome if this bill becomes law and only benefits moneyed interests in a neo-colonial manner.

Thank you,

Dylan Ramos

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/30/2021 1:14:38 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Shannon Rudolph	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

STRONGLY SUPPORT 'REAL' HAWAI`I FARMERS!

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/30/2021 1:28:20 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Natalie Kwon	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I highly support this bill and its efforts to support local farms of taro, a staple produce that is an very important part of traditional Hawaiian and Polynesian diets. Not only does this produce hold a strong cultural tie to the Hawaiian Islands, but it also is a healthy produce that is already utilized in many mainstream foods in Hawaii. Financially supporting taro farmers in Hawaii does not pose a huge financial cut to the Hawaii's economic environment, but it illustrates the government's compassion for Hawaiian produce, the farming traditions and the preservation of Hawaii culture.

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/30/2021 2:39:18 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Amy Brinker	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Support

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/30/2021 3:05:09 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Alexis Rollins	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I support this bill. This is an important step towards supporting native traditional food ways, farming and food security for Hawaii!

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/30/2021 3:27:10 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Kevin Chang	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha,

I support this bill as an incentive that will contribute to the restoration of a more resilient food system, employ young people who want to pursue sustainable farming for Hawaii and to uplift the food staple which is the founding heritage of our home.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify.

Aloha

Kevin

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/30/2021 3:29:41 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Judith White	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Please support!

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/30/2021 4:17:51 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Sandy	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I think this is a great idea, a small way to help increase taro production and food sustainability in Hawaii.

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/30/2021 4:22:42 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Shannon Matson	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Nishihara, and other committee members,

We need to be encouraging a future in which food sustainability is key. We need to be encouraging a future in which farmers are valued and supported. Please pass this bill. Create a Hawai'i where we have greater food security by allowing farmers to focus on feeding their families and communities without a greater financial burden.

Mahalo,

Shannon Matson (Ola'a, Senate District 2)

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/30/2021 6:28:25 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Michael deYcaza	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

With the caveat, "not for export".

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/30/2021 7:28:51 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
kalena Charlene Holani	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

If we truly believe in a sustainable Hawai'i, place, people, culture, and securing the future for our great grandchildren we need to pass this Bill!

Aloha;

I am testifying as taro farmer, consumer of kalo and poi, former member of the Taro Security and Purity Task Force, and long-time member of ‘Onipa‘a Nā Hui Kalo, a recognized statewide organization of taro growers, in strong support for SB341 Relating to Taro.

Notwithstanding the Governor’s call to double local food production by 2030, the fact that taro is our most culturally significant crop and our healthiest staple starch, *there are strong economic, cultural, and environmental justifications for this request for tax exemption for taro farmers* and their raw and value-added products.

Taro farming is an essential business in Hawai‘i. As with every business, COVID has cut deeply into the commercial livelihoods of taro farmers. Most regular orders were cancelled in 2020 leaving growers with very few customers for months. At the same time, taro farmers stepped up to the plate at unprecedented levels to feed their communities on all islands by delivering poi and kalo to kupuna and families in need, to chefs for meal programs, and to food banks week after week. You won’t find these stories in the paper when you read about COVID. And, while the pandemic has set planting schedules back two years for some commercial growers (taro is a 12-month crop), hundreds of subsistence growers and families are planting kalo in a move towards food security. Some of them may become the next generation of commercial taro farmers – if they can afford to.

As taro farmers, we often consider ourselves waiwai (wealthy) in many aspects of our lives. That mindset keeps us going and allows us to support our families and our communities year in and year out. Taro connects us to each other. Yet, over the last few decades, our ability to make a sustainable and dignified livelihood has become more challenging with the increasing cost of land and leases, farm machinery, inputs and new hurdles for bringing products to market. Taro farmers, and small farmers in general in Hawai‘i, make on average less than \$40,000/year (many much less) and report income losses of almost \$10,000 annually (pre-COVID). According to HUD this is rated as “very low income” (40% or less of median income) at a time when HUD has set low income (80% below median income) for Hawai‘i at more than \$88,000/yr.

Taro lands are celebrated as wahi pana (legendary places) in mo‘olelo (traditions and stories) and oli (chant), and often farmed generation to generation building memory upon memory. They are the lands that protect our riparian areas, our coastal wetlands, and feed our fishponds. They contribute to our food security and are teaching our children how to reconnect to healthy ‘ai (food), to ‘āina (land) and aloha ‘āina (stewardship). Taro farms are also typically rural and located on some of the most beautiful lands in our state. As such they have become desirable to the real estate market. *This is a deeply concerning issue*, not just for the above reasons, but also because taro lands, provided they have water, are known to be some of our most productive agricultural (food) lands; and taro systems, including traditional ‘auwai (ditches), have lacked adequate protections from development for decades.

Every year, we see more million dollar homes sprouting up in and encroaching on taro growing communities. The result has been significant increases in land valuations and tax assessments for taro lands from the counties, as well as excessive lease rates from DLNR for taro lands. There is no law protecting these culturally important agricultural lands from being assessed

based on adjacent property values. There are few places left for us to farm affordably. All this adds up to the need for SB341.

Taro is recognized as the State Plant (Act 71) for its deepest connections to Hawaiian culture and a source of their mo‘okū‘auhau (genealogies). It is essential that we support the survival and continuity of taro farming not just for these purposes, but for all that it provides.

SB341 will provide a portion of relief to taro growers from the heavy burden of increasing tax rates. Perhaps 700 acres are currently in wet and dryland taro cultivation statewide. The cap of 30,000 acres in this bill represents just 0.428 percent of all lands in the state and is based on an estimate of lands that were in taro production at the turn of the 20th century when Hawai‘i was both food self-sufficient and food secure. This coincides with an estimate of acres of taro lands needed to contribute a daily serving of taro as part of a healthy diet to consumers in Hawai‘i (Reppun 2009). We need more taro growers to feed our communities. This bill will help keep taro lands in production, encourage new growers, and protect our taro farming lifestyle. Relief from income taxes can be enough to fix a tractor, a truck to transport taro to market, pay for fuel, medical bills or health insurance. Everything counts when you are in a very low income bracket.

SB341 also corrects and simplifies existing tax exemptions for kuleana taro lands in some counties by recognizing the common sense of including fallow land rotations as a critical farm strategy for improving soil health and taro yields, while preventing abuse by limiting the amount of fallow land covered by the exemption to equal or less than acreage in taro production. The bill also recognizes that, towards the goal of food security, all taro growers are a part of the solution, not just those on kuleana lands.

The bill’s threshold of the first \$100,000 gross income per taro farmer prevents abuse of the exemption. Comparatively, the tax break for the film industry was raised to \$50 million in 2019 and Hawai‘i Enterprise Zone businesses may qualify for up to a 100 percent GET exemption. If there is any industry and livelihood that deserves tax relief more than any other in Hawai‘i, it is taro.

The price of poi for consumers is tied to the costs of farming, milling packaging and transport. Milled poi averages \$7-10 per pound retail, making this healthy food inaccessible to those who need it most. While some families have turned to buying taro directly from farmers and pounding their own poi, many still do not have that option. Providing tax relief to taro farmers may help lower the price of poi and/or make more kalo available directly to some consumers.

As bad as it is now, while the revenue impacts of COVID are surely immediate, it is, in the big picture, a short term fiscal challenge. State revenue levels are predicted to return to 2019 forecast levels within four years (per the Council on Revenues Letter to the Governor 1/8/2021), indicating the exemption proposed by SB341 will have negligible impact.

Returning to the intentions of the original 1901 Hawaiian legislature, and the importance of encouraging greater taro production to feed the people of these islands, SB341 is both reasonable and doable. Collectively, we can improve food security for Hawai‘i and this bill is a good step towards that goal. I encourage committee members to look the big picture, as well as the survival of our cultural livelihoods, and support SB341.

Mahalo,
Penny Levin
Taro farmer, Wailuku, Maui

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/30/2021 8:27:21 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Elizabeth Hansen	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Please support this bill- SB341.

Mahalo

Elizabeth Hansen

Hakalau HI 96710

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/30/2021 9:11:12 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Allison Yano	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

As an individual born and raised on the island of Hawaii and who recently gained the experience and knowledge of what it takes to care for the land used, cultivate the taro, produce the poi, then market it, I am in full support of SB 341 to establish an exemption for those working so hard to carry on the family traditions of this culturally significant farming practice and provide a sustainable food source for our communities. This bill is important to continuing family traditions, support expansion, feed our communities, and even allow some to pass on the knowledge to those who may have been reluctant to take on such a venture because of the financial strains involved. We need to do everything in our power to support continuence of taro farming and this bill is the first step in doing so. Mahalo!

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/30/2021 9:16:03 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Emily Kandagawa	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

This bill is critical in helping build the foundations for true and equitable food sovereignty in Hawai'i and reaching the "state's" own sustainability goals, especially in recovering from the local and global impacts of COVID-19.

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/30/2021 9:51:40 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Rebecca M Goldschmidt	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I write in full support of SB341 to give tax exemptions to Kalo Farmers. As a vegetarian for over 20 years and someone who has spent much time studying the decolonization and de-industrialization of food systems, I believe that this bill will allow more positive growth for our local farmers, encourage healthier eating habits throughout the islands, and clear a path towards food sovereignty for Hawaii that IS possible. Kalo is an ancient food that holds cultural significance and sacredness, and we should protect, cultivate, and treat it as such.

Mahalo for moving Hawaii towards true sustainability and food security.

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/30/2021 10:49:00 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Kelsey Amos	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Taro is key to Hawaii's culture and food security, please support this bill.

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/31/2021 6:22:56 AM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Jonathan Kissida	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha Hawaii State Legislature,

Please support establishing an exemption from state income tax for the first \$100,000 of income derived from Kalo (taro, taro products, and land used to produce taro) if the total amount of land used to cultivate taro in Hawaii does not exceed thirty thousand acres at any point in the year. This weill create more aina based work towards a sustainable economy with a focus on other areas than just tourism.

Imagine the collaboration, products, innovation, and connections with keiki and education.

Mahalo for your support,

Angeline and Jonathan Kissida

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/31/2021 9:01:03 AM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
P Noel Bobilin	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha, please support this bill which helps foster growing of an indiginous peoples crop. These sorts of crops help bolster the local community and there by help the world. It hpls people out of poverty, helps to not import food which uses fossil fuels, it fosters taking care of the land in a sustainable way.

Mahalo

P Noel Bobilin, Fern Forest Hawaii

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/31/2021 9:13:36 AM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Nanea Lo	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Hello Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Nishihara and Members of the Committee,

My name is Nanea Lo and I am a Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) who has lived in my ancestral lands for 31 years - all my life. I am writing in to say that I strongly support SB 341.

Kalo or Taro is one of the most culturally significant food crops in Hawai'i and one of the healthiest staple starch foods available. It is also a valued landscape and is recognized as the State Plant. Taro farmers need and deserve support to ensure taro farming continues to grow and expand into the future. This measure helps to incentivize farmers' to grow taro.

We need to do everything we can to support the expansion of farming and particularly the cultivation of taro which is so culturally significant and such an important part of our landscape, history, food security, and community.

Please support the passing of this bill.

me ke aloha 'Ä• ina,

Nanea Lo

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/31/2021 9:24:37 AM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Ka'apunialionalaniki'eki'e Kanaloa Aiwohi	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I strongly support SB 341 to mitigate costs for taro farmers. My family comes from a small valley on Maui that has been raising kalo there as far back as history tells us. Since the early 1900s, the waters of our valley has been diverted and will continue to be diverted into the future. I do not need to go into the self-serving colonist behavior that damaged these lands and in turn damaged those surrounding families. Depriving their main staple, pushing them out of their generational lands in a desperate plea for food and now money. Their Psychological pain is something I personally can't imagine. As a feeling of hope and pursuit of pono, I am asking to take a step forward to repairing and building trust with these long-standing families that grow taro so we can start healing our people again. Restore these communities, financially empower them to make their living, and succeed in the business market of today. Our culture is directly correlated to our pride, our lands are directly correlated to our self-esteem, and our taro is directly related to our connection with our very first elders. Mahalo e ka lehulehu ku kia'i Haloa

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/31/2021 9:44:20 AM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Adam Pellegrin	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

It is important for the State of Hawaii to give it's smaller farmers support for farming Kalo/Taro. Not only does it improve our food security, and our food quality, but it is a boost to the local economy. Historically, the State of Hawaii has actually made it more difficult for kalo/taro producers to cultivate and convert to a food product, with laws restricting the sale of pa'i'ai products, poi pounded in the traditional fashion. The State of Hawaii should support small farmers of kalo/taro, and I strongly support the tax exemption on the first \$100,000 of proceeds from or for kalo/taro cultivation, including land purchase, and ancillary costs.

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/31/2021 10:06:35 AM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Monica Stone	Individual	Comments	No

Comments:

Mahalo for receiving my testimony.

This is an important step towards supporting native traditional food ways, farming and food security for Hawai'i. I SUPPORT SB 341. We need to do everything we can to support expansion of farming and particularly the cultivation of taro which is so culturally significant and such an important part of our landscape, history, food security and community.

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/31/2021 10:23:34 AM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Kathleen Corpuz	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha,

I strongly support SB341 to establish an exemption from state income tax for the first \$100,000 of income derived from taro, taro products, and land used to produce taro. Our island farmers will significantly benefit from SB341 from expanding local food production to improving our economy and securing food for future generations. This pandemic has pointed out to us the vulnerability of U.S. food systems in comparison to the Native Hawaiian traditional system because of our reliance on food imports. Research has shown that laborers in the food industry have the greatest chance of getting sick in a pandemic. If those who work in large food industries are sick, they will not have the capacity to process, distribute, and sell food leaving our islands to starve. We must expand our current local agriculture and SB341 will aid farmers to support themselves and our communities.

In addition, this bill help Hawai become a role model to large-scale farms in the continental United States to practice sustainable farming. Taro farmers rely on their traditional and ecological knowledge, and it is not an easy task. I have been volunteering at Kumuola Foundation for more than 5 years where other student volunteers and I restore the land back to loi kalo. We understand that kalo plays a huge part in the daily diet of Native Hawaiians and it is necessary that farmers in Hawaii can provide taro for local residents who need it. I urge this committee to help our farmers who continue to persist in these unprecedented times, for they play a huge role in providing traditional food in our islands.

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/31/2021 10:38:29 AM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Danielle Espiritu	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I support SB341, our kalo farmers, and kalo production in Hawai'i.

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/31/2021 10:43:34 AM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Derrin Peleras-Costa	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Kalo farming is a religious and cultural practice in the Kanaka way of living. There should be no tax on this plant that made our ancestors survive and that culture and religious practice lives on till today.

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/31/2021 11:11:21 AM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Megan Dooley	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Please vote in support of SB 341 to empower taro farmers to care for their families and 'Ā• ina while significantly contributing to the health and well-being of our community. Mahalo!

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/31/2021 11:16:16 AM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Christopher Kaiakapu	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha mai kakou,

My name is Christopher Ka'iakapu and I SUPPORT BILL 341 in favor of tax exemptions for kalo farmers. I am a native hawaiian, conservationist, health food enthusiast, aspiring farmer, and fishpond restoration worker from Hanapepe, Kaua'i. Not only do I enjoy eating poi, laulau, and the plethora of other food products that are made using the taro plant, but I also honor the deeply spiritual relationship our people have with kalo. Please hear my story.

After leaving a well-paying job as a Power Plant Operator for which I went to university for, I spent nearly the entire year of 2020 working with a fellow farmer to clear 7 acres of land and restore over 10 Lo'i in the Hanapepe valley which had been fallow for some 20 years. I went unpaid for majority of the work I did during this time and I willingly accepted this because I believed in our vision of aloha 'aina, local food security, and restoring our traditional food systems in my home ahupua'a. This land we worked, and indeed most the entire valley, was traditionally used to cultivate taro. Now, like many other valley communities throughout Hawai'i, instead of a vastly productive taro industry, you find few taro farmers, dysfunctional 'auwai, dilapidated houses, abandoned vehicles, vandalism, houselessness, and concentrations of people suffering from mental health issues and drug addiction. On our property, after clearing most of the land, rebuilding a plantation era house, erecting a barn, a commercial size aquaponics system, and pouring hundreds of hours of sweat equity into our local food mission, the lease-holding family whom we had a hand-shake agreement with pulled the rug out from under us by requesting more money than was agreed upon for sub-leasing the land. Heart-break. Now you could say the moral of this story is "get it in writing" not "support taro farmers" and you would not be wrong. But everyday I still look across the valley and see the lo'i we cleared just waiting for wai and huli and think about the hundreds of people in my community it could be feeding. I still have to look across my valley and see a food desert of invasive Opuma and Haole koa trees instead of the images my grandfather describes of lo'i kalo as far as you can see. I still see abandoned vehicles and houseless shelters hiding in fallow lands that might not be there if more Hawaiians could afford to clear that land to be kalo farmers again.

Kalo farming is a labor intensive and water intensive operation. Just as growing kalo is always supposed to have top priority in terms of water rights according to the Hawai'i state constitution, as our most beloved food crop it would seem fitting to afford kalo the same top priority benefits when it comes to business. If we are to strengthen our agriculture industry, reduce our dependence on imported food, reduce obesity and diabetes rates, and live by the values of Aloha 'Aina which we claim, then the approval of bill 341 is a step in that direction. A tax exemption would help level the playing field in a sense and encourage more kalo farming. This in turn would help restore more fallow lands and floodplain water distribution, clear opala, remove invasives, and foster careers in local agriculture. Please, if nothing else do it because I know you love laulau too.

Mahalo no,

Chris Ka'iakapu

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/31/2021 11:24:36 AM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Mary Lacques	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am submitting testimony in strong SUPPORT of SB 341. This bill will not only incentivize farmers to grow more taro, which in turn increases local food production, but more importantly will preserve and perpetuate the cultural tradition of taro cultivation in Hawai'i. The fact that taro is severely underproduced on all the islands making purchasing poi cost prohibitive to local families, should be motivation enough to take this step to encourage increasing this one sector for food security for Hawai'i.

As we move into year two of our "new normal", and food insecurity issues from around the world are more seriously scrutinized, the COVID Pandemic has taught us that local, indigenous crop production is, and always has been, a major component of feeding and sustaining local communities.

It is heartening to read our elected officials' recognition of Hawai'i's flourishing farming community in the text of the bill: "The legislature further finds that small farms on ten acres or less in Hawaii produce a significant portion of locally—grown and locally—consumed food on each island."

Additionally, passage of SB 341 honors the countless hours of work and dedication of the Taro Security and Purity Task Force, which laid the groundwork and path forward for steps to economic incentives for Hawai'i's dedicate and hardworking farmers.

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/31/2021 11:37:47 AM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Benton Kealii Pang, Ph.D.	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am in support.

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/31/2021 11:52:40 AM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Dylan Dane	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am in support of this bill to incentivize and support local Kalo production.

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/31/2021 12:16:40 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Patricia Ka'ïakapu	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha,

I encourage you to support and pass Hawaii State Senate Bill 341 in regards to the taro tax exemptions.

It is incredibly important to provide as much assistance as possible to our taro farmers. This type of farming and the taro it produces is vital to the Hawaiian community's health, history and cultural practices.

Please help to guarantee a prosperous and sustainable future for generations to come.

Mahalo,

Patricia Ka'iakapu

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/31/2021 12:34:55 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Alani Bagcal	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair

Senator Clarence Nishihara, Vice Chair

Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment

Dear Chair Gabbard, Vice-Chair Nishihara, and esteemed members of the committee:

My name is Alani Bagcal and I am writing today in support for SB341.

As a resident of and settler in Hawai`i, I believe that I have a responsibility to show up for the land and support native Hawaiian tradition. SB341 is an important step towards supporting native traditional food ways, farming and food security for Hawai`i. I am very supportive of the expansion of farming and the cultivation of taro, which is so culturally significant and such an important part of Hawai`i's landscape, history, food security and community.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support for this bill,

Alani Bagcal

96815

Relating to Taro

K. Hope

Senate District 12, House District 21

February 1, 2021 at 1:00 PM

Aloha e,

My name is Krystal Hope, I work at a non-profit and live in Honolulu. **I am testifying in support bill SB341.** As I understand, huli / taro is a foundational, cultural aspect of being Hawaiian. Taro has been used for centuries to effectively feed thousands of Hawaiians over time. In the past millions of pounds of taro was produced and shared broadly. Any bill connected to increasing food production of natural, native foods is a step towards returning self-sufficiency and ultimately self-determination of Native Hawaiians and their allies.

Personally, I eat poi, on average, once a week. I often eat poi as a rice replacement. My immediate family eats poi a few times a week. This summer, there was a shortage of poi at one of the local farms we purchase from - we noticed. If more farmers were incentivized to farm taro, there will be an increase in the amount of consumption locally. Should the farmers achieve success at feeding Hawai'i, there could be an increase in imports beyond Hawaii. Therefore, bringing more economy to the pae 'āina.

My additional comment is that the limit to the \$100,000 income limit to be increased to 500,000 or be adjusted based on the volume of production based on pounds or percentage of gross domestic product contributed. This current iteration doesn't assume the cost of effectively paying staff of the farm. As production increases so will the amount of income generated from taro.

I support bill SB341.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/31/2021 12:51:31 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Ryan Santana	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair

Senator Clarence Nishihara, Vice Chair

Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment

Dear Chair Gabbard, Vice-Chair Nishihara, and esteemed members of the committee:

My name is Ryan Santana and I am writing today in support for SB341.

As a resident of and settler in Hawai`i, I believe that I have a responsibility to show up for the land and support native Hawaiian tradition. SB341 is an important step towards supporting native traditional food ways, farming and food security for Hawai`i. I am very supportive of the expansion of farming and the cultivation of taro, which is so culturally significant and such an important part of Hawai`i's landscape, history, food security and community.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support for this bill,

Ryan Santana

96815

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/31/2021 1:53:58 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Brian Jahn	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha mai kākou,

I am writing to express my interest in seeing this act become a bill. I know several small kalo farmers who work tirelessly to produce this staple food which holds deep cultural and nourishing significance. Approving this act will help to keep kalo farmers producing abundantly, which will add to helping keep the governor's pledge to double food production in the [fake] state of Hawai'i by 2030. This will greatly benefit small farmers who already supply significant amounts of local kalo to people in their communities, and will encourage more farmers to grow kalo. With greater lo'i (wetland) kalo production, the environment will benefit as climate change mitigation can be scientifically connected to the existence of these farming systems. With an average salary of \$40,000 annually, and an average of \$10,000 in annual losses, this is an extremely necessary tax waiver that will ensure the survival of the small farmer and increase community activities that are associated with local kalo cultivation. Most importantly, this will allow all people far greater access to kalo, which is not only the staple food of Hawai'i people, but Hāloa, the eldest sibling of kanaka maoli from time immemorial. Mahalo for taking the time to read this testimony. Ke akua pā.

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/31/2021 5:43:08 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
R.Momi Ventura	Individual	Comments	No

Comments:

Our Kalo Farmer's NEED To Be Exempt From Any Taxations Against The Host People Of These Land's Called Hawai'i Nei!!! We As Kanaka Maoli Are Hanging On By Thread's. Stripped Of Our Title's, Lands And Lifestyle. Mostly Taxed Without Representation.. Our Kingdom Of Hawai'i Is Still A Kingdom In Exile, And Is In Itself Existing. Leave The Kalo Farmers Alone And TAX Tourism And The Enormous Ammounts Of Trash Heaped Upon Our Island's, With No End In Sight. Kalo Farmer's Need Clean Cokld Waters To Grow Kalo, They Need Our Support Not To Be Taxed Out Of Existence. Please Let My People Work Free From Taxes Put Upon Us By Foreigners. Mahalo For Your Time And Consideration.

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/31/2021 6:01:10 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
cathy lee	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Not only does this bill serve to foster economic diversification within the State, it encourages the growth and production of resources that thrive in Hawaii and is a cultural staple locally. For these reasons, I encourage SB341.

SB-341

Submitted on: 1/31/2021 8:28:00 PM

Testimony for AEN on 2/1/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
JoAnne Kaona	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Via Email Transmittal

January 31, 2021

SB341 - support

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of this bill SB341. My name is JoAnne Kaona and I am a fourth generation Native Hawaiian kalo farmer in Wai'oli. I was born and raised on Kaua'i, grew up in Wai'oli, and I have been helping my Dad, Clarence "Shorty" Kaona, farm our family kuleana and a handful of other small parcels for about 13 years.

For me, kalo farming defines our 'ohana. My Dad took over kalo farming from his Dad, and his Dad took over from his Dad. Today, I help my Dad every weekend. Some days, we catch up on what's new with each other and other days we work in total silence. Either way, for me, this is something special that we share, and so much more than any job. At 85 years old, my Dad is still farming fulltime and I want to be able to 'auamo this important kuleana when he's ready for me to take over. I want to be able to pass down this piece of who we are to future generations. This is my kuleana for both my 'ohana and as a Native Hawaiian whose family has helped to steward Wai'oli since time immemorial.

I currently work at the Waipā• Foundation, a nonprofit in the neighboring ahupua'a. There, we educate the community about aloha 'Ā• ina, sustainability, natural resource management, and traditional and customary Native Hawaiian practices.

Currently as farmers we face many challenges. Still recovering from the historic 2018 flood the Wai'oli Valley Taro Hui has been trying to navigate through a complex legal maze to ensure that we will always have water to grow kalo. Not to mention the damage that the flood caused to equipment, soil structure, and the integrity of our entire irrigation system. Despite these challenges we have to remain resilient, I believe this bill will help support a lot of kalo farmers in these tough times and help to perpetuate this native hawaiian tradition.

Mahalo for your time, JoAnne Kaona