

SCR55 SD1

URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES TO ADOPT
ADMINISTRATIVE RULES TO STREAMLINE THE ROCESS FOR ALLOWING
TRADITIONAL HAWAIIAN FARMING SYSTEMS ON CONSERVATION LANDS

Ke Kōmike Hale o ka Wai a me ka ‘Āina
House Committee on Water and Land

‘Apelila 6, 2021

8:30 a.m.

Lumi 430

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS SCR55 SD1**, which urges the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) to adopt administrative rules to streamline the process for allowing traditional Hawaiian farming systems on conservation district lands. **The rules that this resolution contemplates, if appropriately tailored, would help to facilitate ecologically compatible and environmentally sustainable traditional Native Hawaiian farming practices and approaches, thereby furthering the State’s interests in food self-sufficiency, cultural perpetuation, and economic diversification.**

OHA is the constitutionally-established agency responsible for protecting and promoting the rights and interests of Native Hawaiians. Accordingly, OHA has a kuleana to ensure the perpetuation of traditional practices, values, and technologies, as well as advocate for the appropriate and sustainable use and development of our beneficiaries’ ancestral lands. OHA therefore appreciates that this resolution seeks to address challenges that Native Hawaiian farmers may face in perpetuating traditional Hawaiian farming systems and practices in the conservation district.

OHA notes that the rules contemplated in this measure would specifically facilitate the implementation of the State Planning Act’s agricultural objectives, which seek to promote the food security, self-sufficiency, and cultural heritage of our islands, by recognizing the perpetuation of Hawaiian traditional farming techniques and crops and the growth and development of small farms as an agricultural objective of the State.

In addition, OHA notes that this measure may represent an investment in our islands’ economic stability. Small farms are small businesses; supporting small traditional farming operations in Hawai‘i would diversify our local economy and promote the spirit of agricultural entrepreneurship, in the same manner as supporting other sectors of the small business community.

Finally, the OHA believes that the contemplated administrative rules may help to level the playing field for traditional farmers, who often have difficulty competing with

large-scale and environmentally disruptive agricultural operations, by expressly facilitating the establishment of ecologically integrated traditional agriculture within the conservation district. Notably, by promoting a diversified and balanced agriculture portfolio with both small- and large-scale farming operations, this measure would enhance our islands' food security and resilience to unexpected impacts, while also celebrating our cultural heritage, practices, knowledge, and values.

OHA does note that existing regulatory protections, including our environmental and land use laws, do play a critical role in preventing or mitigating negative impacts to natural and cultural resources and practices, including traditional Hawaiian farming practices. For example, in its 2010 report, the Taro Security and Purity Task Force strongly supported the existing legal framework for the management and stewardship of our public trust resources.¹ Accordingly, OHA looks forward to working with the DLNR to ensure that any administrative rules developed pursuant to this measure maintain appropriate protections for natural and cultural resources and sites within the conservation district, while addressing the hurdles and challenges that bona fide farmers may face in restoring traditional Hawaiian agricultural practices that have sustained our islands since time immemorial.

Therefore, OHA urges the Committee to **PASS** SCR55 SD1. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this important agricultural initiative.

¹ TARO SECURITY AND PURITY TASK FORCE, E OLA HOU KE KALO; HO'I HOU KA 'ĀINA LĒ'IA – THE TARO LIVES; ABUNDANCE RETURNS TO THE LAND (2010).