



HB275 HD1
RELATING TO TARO
House Committee on Finance

February 23, 2023

11:30 AM

Room 308

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) offers its **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS** for HB275 HD1, which would establish a grant program to assist kalo farmers in their kalo operations. **OHA asks that the Legislature also require the State of Hawai'i Department of Agriculture, in its adoption of rules for this program, to also take into special consideration the inequities and disparities faced by "socially disadvantaged farmers in Hawai'i," like Native Hawaiian mahi'ai (farmers), and their unique funding needs.**

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers (SDFR) "as those belonging to groups that have been subject to racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice."¹ The USDA has affirmed that Native Hawaiians are recognized under the SDFR characterization² and a number of financial support instruments exist through the USDA for SDFRs.³ While this distinction and the needs of those within this designation exist at the federal level, the State of Hawai'i has yet to adopt the necessary policies and mechanisms to address inequities and disparities faced by socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, like Native Hawaiian mahi'ai. **As the principal public agency in the State responsible for the performance, development, and coordination of programs and activities relating to Native Hawaiians, OHA asks this legislature to ensure that Native Hawaiian farmers and ranchers are provided equitable farm assistance opportunities, such as the grants proposed through this measure.**

OHA appreciates this opportunity to offer its support with amendments on this measure. Mahalo nui loa.

¹ USDA Economic Research Service, Socially Disadvantaged, Beginning, Limited Resource, and Female Farmers and Ranchers, available at <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/farm-economy/socially-disadvantaged-beginning-limited-resource-and-female-farmers-and-ranchers/#:~:text=The%20USDA%20defines%20socially%20disadvantaged,and%20Asian%20or%20Pacific%20I slander.>

² USDA Farm Service Agency, Minority and Women Farmers and Ranchers, available at <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/farm-loan-programs/minority-and-women-farmers-and-ranchers/index>.

³ USDA Farm Service Agency, Loans for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Fact Sheet 2019, available at https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdafiles/FactSheets/2019/sda_loans-fact_sheet-aug_2019.pdf.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

SYLVIA LUKE
Lt. Governor



SHARON HURD
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

MORRIS M. ATTA
Deputy to the Chairperson

State of Hawai'i
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
KA 'OIHANA MAHI'AI
1428 South King Street
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96814-2512
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TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2023
11:30 A.M.
CONFERENCE ROOM 308 AND VIDEO CONFERENCING

HOUSE BILL NO. 275 HD1
RELATING TO TARO

Chair Yamashita and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on House Bill 275 HD1. This bill appropriates funds to the Department of Agriculture (Department) to provide grants to Hawaii farming groups to be dispersed to taro farmers. The Department supports this measure and offers the following comments.

The Department respectfully requests deleting the language attributing the finding to the Department on page 2, lines 4 to 6, since it has not published nor issued any statement to that effect. Additionally, on lines 19 to 20, the statement that "taro imports are estimated to soon exceed local production" should be deleted. Current data suggests that imported taro (fresh, chilled, frozen, or dried) in 2021 amounted to only 334,000 pounds. In 2019, pre-pandemic, a total of 454,262 pounds of taro were imported. These amounts are less than 12 percent of local production, and taro imports are statistically unlikely to exceed local production in the near future.

Additionally, the Department respectfully recommends that language on page 4, lines 12 to 14 be amended by deleting "five years" and replacing it with "one year" so



that all taro farmers (new or veteran) have an equal opportunity to access the proposed grant funding.

Finally, the Department supports this measure, so long as it does not adversely impact the priorities identified in our Executive Budget request.

Thank you for your consideration on this measure.

RICHARD T. BISSEN, JR.
Mayor

KEKUHAUPIO R. AKANA
Acting Managing Director



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
COUNTY OF MAUI
200 SOUTH HIGH STREET
WAILUKU, MAUI, HAWAII 96793
www.mauicounty.gov

February 22, 2023

TO: Honorable Rep. Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
Honorable Rep. Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair
House Committee on Finance

FROM: Richard T. Bissen, Jr., Mayor
Rogerene K.M. Arce, Director of Agriculture

DATE: February 22, 2023

SUBJECT: SUPPORT OF HB 275 HD1, RELATING TO TARO

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **SUPPORT** of this important measure. The purpose of this measure is to appropriate funds to the department of agriculture to provide grants to assist taro farmers in meeting the costs of cultivating taro for consumption.

Our administration **SUPPORTS** this measure for the following reasons:

1. This measure will contribute to increasing the cultivation and industry of taro in Hawai'i.
2. This measure will contribute to reducing the cost of taro-based foods for Hawai'i consumers.
3. This measure will support the growth of taro farming in Hawai'i, and contribute to the preservation of an essential cultural practice.

For the foregoing reasons, we offer our **SUPPORT** of this measure.



Food+ Policy Internship 2023

food@purplemaia.org

February 12, 2023

To: Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and the House Committee on Finance

Subject: **HB275**, Relating to Taro

Food+ Policy strongly supports HB275 and the grant program for taro farmers it would create.

Taro is a very sustainable crop and staple starch that has been grown in Hawai'i for thousands of years, so it's very conducive to living in harmony with the resources of Hawai'i. However, two million pounds of taro is currently shipped in to meet basic demand for the State of Hawai'i.

This tells us that more taro needs to be grown in Hawai'i nei. Growing more taro will allow taro to be more affordable like it once was so Native Hawaiians can eat taro and their traditional dishes more regularly. By engaging in their culture by working taro lands, making traditional dishes of poi, kulolo, luau, and laulau, Native Hawaiians can reconnect more easily with their culture by eating these foods regularly instead of only on special occasions.

We humbly ask for the support of passing HB275.

Mahalo,
Kelsey Amos & the Food+ Policy Team
#fixourfoodsystem

The Food+ Policy internship develops student advocates who learn work skills while increasing 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 2023, the cohort of interns are undergraduate and graduate students from throughout the UH System. They are a mix of traditional and nontraditional students, including parents and veterans, who have backgrounds in education, farming, public health, nutrition, and Hawaiian culture.



Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action (HAPA) Supports: HB275 HD1

Thursday, February 23, 2023 11:30 a.m. Conference Room 308

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa and Members of the Committee,

We support HB275 HD1 which appropriates funds to the department of agriculture to provide grants to Hawai'i farming groups to be disbursed to taro farmers.

HB275 HD1 is a critical and necessary step towards supporting native traditional food ways, farming and food security for Hawai'i. We need to do everything we can to support expansion of farming and particularly the cultivation of taro (kalo) which is so culturally significant and is such an important part of our landscape, history, food security and community.

We believe this measure is a great way to support a native cultural practice and Hawai'i's staple food. Supporting taro farmers will also help to keep native Hawaiian traditional and customary cultural practices & its vital agricultural knowledge alive.

Kalo is a valued landscape and is recognized as the State Plant. Kalo 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, one of the healthiest staple starch foods available.

HB275 HD1 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 HB275 HD1.

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



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 23, 2023

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

TESTIMONY ON HB 275, HD1
RELATING TO TARO

Conference Room 308 & Videoconference
11:30 AM

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice-Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Committee:

I am Brian Miyamoto, Executive Director of the Hawai'i Farm Bureau (HFB). Organized since 1948, the HFB is comprised of 1,800 farm family members statewide and serves as Hawai'i's voice of agriculture to protect, advocate and advance the social, economic, and educational interests of our diverse agricultural community.

The Hawai'i Farm Bureau supports HB 275, HD1, which appropriates funds to the department of agriculture to provide grants to Hawaii farming groups to be disbursed to taro farmers.

The Hawai'i Farm Bureau recognizes taro's importance in Hawai'i'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.

Hawai'i 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 Hawai'i, 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 HB 275, which is an investment in Hawai'i's taro farmers.

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



Officers

Kaipo Kekona
State President

Anabella Bruch
Vice-President

Maureen Datta
Secretary

Reba Lopez
Treasurer

Chapter Presidents

Madeline Ross
Kohala, Hawaii

Odysseus Yacalis
East Hawaii

Puna, Hawaii

Andrea Drayer
Ka'u, Hawaii

Chantal Chung
Kona, Hawaii

Fawn Helekahi-Burns
Hana, Maui

Reba Lopez
Haleakala, Maui

Kaiea Medeiros
Mauna Kahalawai,
Maui

Kaipo Kekona
Lahaina, Maui

Rufina Kaauwai
Molokai

Negus Manna
Lana'i

Brynn Foster
North Shore, O'ahu

Christian Zuckerman
Wai'anae, O'ahu

Ted Radovich
Waimanalo, O'ahu

Vincent Kimura
Honolulu, O'ahu

Ray Maki
Kauai

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the House Finance Committee,

The Hawaii Farmers Union United (HFUU) is a 501(c)(5) agricultural advocacy nonprofit representing a network of over 2,500 family farmers and their supporters across the Hawaiian Islands. **HFUU supports HB275.**

Taro farming is an essential part of Hawaii's culture and history, and the funds allocated in this bill will help secure the industry for future generations.

The funds from HB275 Taro will provide taro farmers with grants that can be used to purchase equipment or materials needed for farming, as well as to make infrastructure improvements that will lead to greater production capacity. Additionally, these funds will provide resources and education opportunities to farmers that may be spread too thin to access otherwise. By helping ensure the future of taro farming in Hawaii, the Hawaii Farmers Union United strongly and fully supports HB275.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Kaipo Kekona, President HFUU/HFUF



SIERRA CLUB OF HAWAI'I

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

February 23, 2023

11:30 AM

Conference Room 308

In **SUPPORT** of **HB275 HD1**: Relating to Taro

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the House Committee on Finance,

On behalf of our 20,000 members and supporters, the Sierra Club of Hawai'i **SUPPORTS HB275 HD1**, which would help us to rebuild our islands' food self-sufficiency and resilience in the face of climate destabilization.

With climate destabilization causing more extreme weather patterns both locally and in the regions where we now source much of our food, our kalo farmers and local food producers need additional investments to stabilize and expand their food production capacity, and mitigate our vulnerability to the all but inevitable disruptions of our trans-Pacific food supply chains.

As the legislature works to diversify local agriculture and support Hawai'i's communities, it is crucial to support the small family farms and the kalo cultivation enterprises that may hold the key to our future food security and self-sufficiency. This bill will provide needed support to kalo farmers across our islands, and facilitate achieving Hawai'i's goals for local food production.

Moreover, as this bill notes, the Taro Purity and Security Task Force Report highlighted the importance of kalo cultivation to our islands' cultural identity and integrity. Accordingly, supporting greater kalo cultivation, as proposed in this measure, would also help to rebuild these additional, critical components of our islands' overall resilience to climate destabilization.

Accordingly, the Sierra Club of Hawai'i urges the Committee to **PASS** HB275 HD1. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify.

HB-275-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2023 10:13:22 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2023 11:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cards Pintor	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I support this bill.

Mahalo nui,

Cards Pintor

HB-275-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2023 4:04:20 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2023 11:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
pamela burrell	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha House Members,

If any entity should be able to receive a grant, our taro farmers should top the list. Taro is the root of our culture. Please consider supporting this measure.

Mahalo for your hard work.,

Pamela Burrell, Kalihiwai, Kaua'i

HB-275-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2023 6:12:16 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2023 11:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mary Lu Kelley	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

Coming from Kauai, I strongly support HB275 HD1, which is a critical and necessary step towards supporting Native Hawaiian traditional foodways, farming, and food security for Hawai‘i. We need to do everything we can to support the expansion of farming and particularly the cultivation of taro (kalo) which is so culturally significant and an essential part of our landscape, history, food security, and community.

We believe this measure is a great way to support a Native cultural practice and Hawai‘i’s staple food. Supporting taro farmers will also help to keep traditional Native Hawaiian practices and vital agricultural knowledge alive.

Kalo is a valued landscape and is recognized as the State Plant. Kalo 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, one of the healthiest staple starch foods available.

Please support HB275 HD1.

Mahalo,

Mary Lu Kelley

Lawai, Kauai

HB-275-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2023 7:19:56 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2023 11:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michele Nihipali	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

HB275 HD1 is a critical and necessary step towards supporting Native Hawaiian traditional foodways, farming, and food security for Hawai‘i. We need to do everything we can to support the expansion of farming and particularly the cultivation of taro (kalo) which is so culturally significant and an essential part of our landscape, history, food security, and community.

We believe this measure is a great way to support a Native cultural practice and Hawai‘i’s staple food. Supporting taro farmers will also help to keep traditional Native Hawaiian practices and vital agricultural knowledge alive.

Kalo is a valued landscape and is recognized as the State Plant. Kalo 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, one of the healthiest staple starch foods available.

Please support HB275 HD1.

Mahalo,

Michele Nihipali

54-074 A Kam Hwy.

Hauula, HI 96717

HB-275-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2023 9:13:01 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2023 11:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Will Caron	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support HB275 HD1.

HB-275-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2023 9:18:32 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2023 11:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nanea Lo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello,

HB275 HD1 is a critical and necessary step towards supporting Native Hawaiian traditional foodways, farming, and food security for Hawai‘i. We need to do everything we can to support the expansion of farming and particularly the cultivation of taro (kalo) which is so culturally significant and an essential part of our landscape, history, food security, and community.

We believe this measure is a great way to support a Native cultural practice and Hawai‘i’s staple food. Supporting taro farmers will also help to keep traditional Native Hawaiian practices and vital agricultural knowledge alive.

Kalo is a valued landscape and is recognized as the State Plant. Kalo 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, one of the healthiest staple starch foods available.

Please support HB275 HD1.

me ke aloha ‘āina,

Nanea Lo, mō‘ili‘ili

HB-275-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2023 11:28:23 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2023 11:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessica Kuzmier	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I am testifying in support of HB275 HD1, as I believe public financing and grants to boost taro farming is a great idea, both culturally and environmentally. Mahalo for your time.

HB-275-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2023 8:09:49 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2023 11:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Johnnie-Mae L. Perry	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry SUPPORT HB 275 RELATING TO TARO. To include the Waianae community.

HB-275-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/23/2023 8:32:09 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2023 11:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marsha Hee	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

HB275 HD1 is a critical and necessary step towards supporting Native Hawaiian traditional foodways, farming, and food security for Hawai‘i. We need to do everything we can to support the expansion of farming and particularly the cultivation of taro (kalo) which is so culturally significant and an essential part of our landscape, history, food security, and community.

We believe this measure is a great way to support a Native cultural practice and Hawai‘i’s staple food. Supporting taro farmers will also help to keep traditional Native Hawaiian practices and vital agricultural knowledge alive.

Kalo is a valued landscape and is recognized as the State Plant. Kalo 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, one of the healthiest staple starch foods available.

Please support HB275 HD1.

Respectfully Submitted in Mahalo,

Marsha Hee, life-long resident of Hawaii - currently living in Volcano, Hawaii Island

HB-275-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/23/2023 9:55:08 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2023 11:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Barryn Chun	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

We should be developing and promoting local food production, and using food produced by these programs, so I support this bill as part of that initiative.