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WILLIAM J. AILA, JR.
CHAIRMAN
HAWAIIAN HOMES COMMISSION

TYLER I. GOMES
DEPUTY TO THE CHAIRMAN

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

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TESTIMONY OF WILLIAM J. AILA, JR, CHAIRMAN
HAWAIIAN HOMES COMMISSION
BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY
DECISION MAKING ON APRIL 1, 2021 AT 9:35AM VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

HB 756, HD2, SD1, RELATING TO THE BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

April 1, 2021

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Keohokalole, and members of the Committee:

The Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL) strongly supports this bill which designates one of the at-large positions on the Board of Agriculture as the Chairperson of the Hawaiian Homes Commission (HHC) and provides that the Chairperson of the HHC will serve on the Board of Agriculture upon the expiration of an at-large position's term. The HHC approved a similar measure, but it was not included in the Governor's administrative package.

DHHL supports this bill and suggests an amendment increasing the Board of Agriculture from ten to eleven members resulting in an odd number of board members and eliminating the need for the provision in the bill that the Chairperson of the HHC serve on the Board of Agriculture upon the expiration of an at-large position's term, thereby allowing the Chairperson of the HHC to begin serving on the Board of Agriculture upon enactment.

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

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony.



HB756 HD2 SD1
RELATING TO THE BOARD OF AGRICULTURE
Ke Kōmike ‘Aha Kenekoa o ka Ho‘okolokolo
Senate Committee on Judiciary

‘Apelila 1, 2021

9:35 a.m.

Hālāwai Keleka‘a‘ike

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS** HB756 HD2 SD1, which would add the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL) chairperson as an “ex officio” voting member to the Board of Agriculture (Board). Allowing DHHL a seat on the Board will provide needed representation for native Hawaiian agricultural beneficiaries as an important part of Hawai‘i’s growing small-scale agricultural community. ~~OHA appreciates the recent SD1 removal of the short sunset date, to better effectuate the purpose and intent of this bill.~~

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DHHL’s unique mission, purpose, and activities will provide the Board with a valuable and important perspective that may benefit both DHHL agricultural lessees as well as and our islands as a whole. DHHL began with agricultural homesteads on Moloka‘i, and facilitating agricultural homesteading continues to be a major part of DHHL’s mission to enable native Hawaiians’ return to the land. ~~∴~~ **DHHL currently represents the interests of 16,470 agricultural beneficiaries and 43,569 acres of agricultural lands.**^{1,2} DHHL’s Agricultural Program Plan also seeks to increase the issuance of agricultural homestead lots for lessees.³ HB756 HD2 SD1 will therefore provide a needed voice on the Board for DHHL as a major and long-standing stakeholder in our islands’ agriculture landscape, to ensure that the interests of its beneficiaries are adequately considered, and to facilitate their contribution to our islands’ economic resilience and food self-sufficiency.

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Accordingly, OHA urges the Committees to **PASS** HB756 HD2 SD1. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

¹ DEPARTMENT OF HAWAIIAN HOME LANDS, FOR INFORMATION ONLY—DHHL AGRICULTURAL PROGRAM PLAN SURVEY RESULTS 6 (2021).

² Department of Hawaiian Home Lands, Island Plans, available at <https://dhhl.hawaii.gov/po/island-plans/> (last accessed Mar. 14, 2021).

³ Department of Hawaiian Home Lands, Agricultural Program Plan, available at <https://dhhl.hawaii.gov/po/program-plans/agriculture-program-plan/> (last accessed Mar. 14, 2021).