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TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 29, 2023

9:30 A.M.

CONFERENCE ROOM 325 AND VIDEO CONFERENCING

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 169

Chairperson Gates and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on House Concurrent Resolution 169. The resolution requests the Department of Agriculture (Department) to examine existing laws related to the sugar and pineapple industries and to determine whether updates should be made for the utilization of diversified crops. The Department offers the following comments on this resolution.

The Department appreciates the Legislature's intent and acknowledges the downsizing of the plantation-based sector could convert the use of public agricultural lands to enhance the local economy, provide employment opportunities, decrease reliance on imported agricultural products, and provide for more locally grown food to residents.

An examination into existing land/zoning laws that may be antiquated and/or possibly impede the transformation from plantation-based to diversified agriculture is logical and prudent. Likewise, an assessment into existing laws related to critical water infrastructure, including dams, reservoirs, irrigations systems, and access roads is helpful. Finally, it makes rational sense to review and revise all laws established during the plantation era relating to quarantine, industry development, and public subsidies to reflect the new realities of smaller farms/ranches in present-day Hawaii.

We will defer specific policy, planning, and development matters to the ADC, which was established by the State Legislature in 1994 to facilitate and coordinate the development and expansion of Hawaii's agricultural industry by directly participating in the shift from plantation-based production and infrastructure to a multi-farm/multi-crop industry.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this resolution.

