

DAVID Y. IGE
Governor

JOSH GREEN
Lt. Governor



PHYLLIS SHIMABUKURO-GEISER
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

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State of Hawaii
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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TESTIMONY OF PHYLLIS SHIMABUKURO-GEISER
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

FEBRUARY 14, 2022
1:20 P.M.
VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

SENATE BILL NO. 2944
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL LANDS

Chairperson Gabbard and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill No. 2944 that prohibits “waste disposal facilities” on “A”-rated land in the Agricultural District and prohibits the creation of “waste disposal sites” on Important Agricultural Land. The Department of Agriculture supports the intent of this measure that seeks to protect agricultural lands with the highest productivity potential from land uses that are inconsistent with agricultural production.

The Department recommends the Committee consider including “B”-rated agricultural that are often found adjacent to “A”-rated lands and are also considered to possess very good productivity potential for most agricultural uses.

(Page 2, line 14 to page 3, line 5, new language is double underscored and bold)

"(7) Public, private, and quasi-public utility lines and roadways, transformer stations, communications equipment buildings, solid waste transfer stations, major water storage tanks, and appurtenant small buildings such as booster pumping stations, but not including offices or yards for equipment, material, vehicle storage, repair or



maintenance, treatment plants, corporation yards, or other similar structures; provided that waste disposal facilities shall not be permitted on lands with soil classified by the land study bureau's detailed land classification as overall (master) productivity rating class A **and B**;"

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our testimony on this measure.



Email: communications@ulupono.com

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & ENVIRONMENT
Monday, February 14, 2022 — 1:20 p.m.

Ulupono Initiative supports SB 2944, Relating to Agricultural Lands.

Dear Chair Gabbard and Members of the Committee:

My name is Micah Munekata, and I am the Director of Government Affairs at Ulupono Initiative. We are a Hawai'i-focused impact investment firm that strives to improve the quality of life throughout the islands by helping our communities become more resilient and self-sufficient through locally produced food; renewable energy and clean transportation; and better management of freshwater and waste.

Ulupono supports SB 2944, which prohibits the use of important agricultural lands (IAL) and lands with class A productivity ratings for waste disposal.

Ulupono supports our local producers across the state and believes that maintaining Hawai'i's most productive agricultural lands will help local communities meet our sustainability and resiliency commitments for generations to come. We understand that competing interests seek similar lands across the state. Lands that, amongst other things, have healthy soils, little to no slope, access to water, utilities and infrastructure, and a favorable location are attractive to many industry sectors that seek land-intensive operations, including those in the energy and waste sectors.

Agricultural Lands classified as "A" are considered the most productive. They constitute about 3 percent or about 56,000 acres of the nearly 1.93 million acres of agriculturally zoned land in Hawai'i. We ask this committee to consider adding agricultural lands classified as "B" to this measure as they also have highly productive soils for production agriculture. Class "B" agricultural lands constitute about 6 percent or about 112,609 acres of the nearly 1.93 million acres of agriculturally zoned land in Hawai'i. If we are serious about supporting local farmers and ranchers, and meeting our food security goals, this small percentage of extremely viable agricultural land should remain in productive agriculture.

The State's IAL lands prioritize agriculture by maintaining agriculturally zoned lands in production in perpetuity. The IAL designation remains a direct commitment to agricultural

Investing in a Sustainable Hawai'i



production and its role for Hawai'i's resilient future. Allowing this designation to reopen for additional uses can threaten currently identified IAL lands and future production as we look to increase our local ag footprint here in Hawai'i. We should encourage future generations with dedicated agricultural lands and resources that are best suited for success. This bill seeks to maintain that hope.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Micah Munekata
Director of Government Affairs



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February 14, 2022

HEARING BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

TESTIMONY ON SB 2944
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL LANDS

Conference Room 224 & Videoconference
1:20 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 2944, which prohibits the use of important agricultural lands and lands with class A productivity ratings for waste disposal.

Land is one of the greatest resources in Hawaii. HFB believes that policies must be developed and implemented which would ensure long-term viable agricultural use of this resource is used for the general welfare of the people of Hawaii and reserved for the benefit of future generations. Act 183 (SLH 2005) and Act 233 (SLH) provide policies and mechanisms to identify and protect Important Agricultural Lands as required by the State Constitution, Article XI, Section 3.

As our population increases the farming community continues to see an increase in competing uses for agriculturally zoned lands, such as housing, solar, and now waste disposal sites.

We recognize that in the land category system used today, agriculture was originally the catchall land classification and that some lands included within the agricultural district were not necessarily considered optimal for agriculture. However, agriculture has significantly evolved. Soil classification is no longer the only determinant of land good for agriculture. Greenhouses, hydroponics, aquaculture, and aquaponics are just a few of the many types of agriculture that can occur on *all* classes of land (A, B, C, D, E). Some of the best floriculture and hydroponic operations in Hawaii are on C, D, and E lands. The total environment, including rainfall amount and timing, day and night-time temperatures, wind, and humidity each contribute to whether a particular region is suitable for a specific crop. In many cases, the soil type and even the existing terrain are not determinative of whether farming can exist and thrive.

HFB recognizes the need for future landfill locations, however, we have serious concerns about future waste or disposal facilities being sited on agriculturally zoned land, especially land with soil classified by the land study bureau's detailed land classification as overall (master) productivity rating class A and lands designated as Important Ag Lands (IAL).

HFB believes that the primary use of agriculturally zoned lands is production agriculture. We should direct nonagricultural uses and activities from agricultural lands to other areas and ensure that uses on agricultural lands are actual agricultural uses. The coronavirus pandemic has underlined the importance of agriculture in our isolated and vulnerable state. We must protect agricultural lands and avoid simplistic solutions to Hawaii's waste disposal problems.

We respectfully request that lands with class B productivity ratings also be included in the prohibition.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on this important subject.



HAWAII CROP IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

In Support of SB2944
Relating to Agricultural Lands

Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment

Date: Monday, February 14, 2022

Time: 1:20 p.m.

Place: Videoconference

Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Nishihara, and members of the committee:

Thank you for allowing the Hawaii Crop Improvement Association the opportunity to provide testimony in **support** of SB2944, which prohibits the use of important agricultural lands and lands with class A productivity ratings for waste disposal.

Siting landfills on agricultural lands presents safety and compliance problems for farm owners and the public. Farmers must comply with food and safety regulations to ensure they produce and sell quality crops. It is a complex regulatory compliance program that has created added expenses for local farmers. Having a landfill on or near farmland jeopardizes crop safety because it may contaminate with dust, soil runoff, or poor water quality. Farm owners are then forced to pull back and reduce productive farm acres, move operations elsewhere, or, worst of all, close down all operations. Agriculture is an important part of Hawaii's economy and sustainability strategy. For these reasons, we support this measure to prohibit waste disposal on important agricultural lands and lands with class A productivity ratings.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify in support of SB2944. If you have any questions, please contact me at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Pono Chong
Hawaii Crop Improvement Association

The Hawaii Crop Improvement Association is a Hawaii-based non-profit organization that promotes modern agriculture to help farmers and communities succeed. Through education, collaboration, and advocacy, we work to ensure a safe and sustainable food supply, support responsible farming practices, and build a healthy economy.