

STAND. COM. REP. NO.

2412

Honolulu, Hawaii

FEB 15 2024

RE: S.B. No. 2423  
S.D. 1

Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi  
President of the Senate  
Thirty-Second State Legislature  
Regular Session of 2024  
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committee on Agriculture and Environment, to which was referred S.B. No. 2423 entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO AGRICULTURE,"

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose and intent of this measure is to:

- (1) Require the Department of Agriculture to establish a Healthy Soils Program (Program); and
- (2) Appropriate \$500,000 for the establishment of the Program and to issue awards and other financial incentives pursuant to the Program.

Your Committee received testimony in support of this measure from the Kauai Climate Action Coalition; Hawai'i Forest Industry Association; Hawaii Cattlemen's Council, Inc.; Hawai'i Farm Bureau, Hawai'i Farmers Union United; Democratic Party of Hawai'i; Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action; Hawaii Food+ Policy; Haleakala Biochar; Beyond Organic Consulting Inc.; and twenty-five individuals.

Your Committee received comments on this measure from the Department of Agriculture.



Your Committee finds that healthy soils are critical for the State to meet its local food production and carbon sequestration goals. According to testimony received by your Committee, soils in Hawaii continue to recover from a century of sugarcane and pineapple production as high levels of commercial monocrop farming have been proven to deplete nutrients, reduce the biodiversity of insects and microbes that are beneficial to soil health, and cause soil erosion. Your Committee recognizes that soil conservation is necessary for food security and, in the face of invasive pests and increasingly extreme climate events, a healthy soils program is necessary to ensure future local food production. This measure will establish a plan and standards for healthy soil development and conservation, and provide small farmers, ranchers, and landowners with education, assistance, and incentives to improve the soil health and build soil carbon stocks in the State.

Your Committee acknowledges the concerns raised by the Department of Agriculture that it does not have the expertise to establish and operate the Healthy Soils Program proposed in this measure.

Accordingly, your Committee has amended this measure by:

- (1) Inserting language that allows the Department of Agriculture to consult with or contract a third-party for any needed expertise; and
- (2) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity and consistency.

As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on Agriculture and Environment that is attached to this report, your Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of S.B. No. 2423, as amended herein, and recommends that it pass Second Reading in the form attached hereto as S.B. No. 2423, S.D. 1, and be referred to your Committee on Ways and Means.



Respectfully submitted on  
behalf of the members of the  
Committee on Agriculture and  
Environment,

  
MIKE GABBARD, Chair



