



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## Legislative Testimony

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Written Testimony Presented Before the  
Senate Committee on Education

And

Senate Committee on Agriculture  
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By

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And

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And

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### SB 1303 – RELATING TO APPROPRIATIONS

Chairs Kidani and Ruderman, Vice Chairs Harimoto and Riviere, and members of the committees, thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 1303, which appropriates funds for new positions within the department of education, agribusiness development corporation, and college of tropical agriculture and human resources at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

We greatly appreciate the intent of SB 1303 to increase staffing within all three state agencies. With amendment to clarify the position classifications identified in SB 1303, we believe that the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, can address the areas of need identified here. We support the bill provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in the University's Board of Regents Approved Executive Biennium Budget.

The four positions identified in SB 1303 for the University of Hawai'i are (1) one external crop advisor, (2) one field advisor, (3) one extension agent, and (4) one workforce development agent. Given University of Hawai'i position classifications, we interpret this as meaning four extension agents, three with particular areas of emphasis, and one with more general agricultural expertise.

For clarification, we suggest amendment to re-state the above-named four positions as follows:

- (1) Extension agent with expertise in field crops
- (2) Extension agent with expertise in soils
- (3) Extension agent with horticultural and pest management expertise
- (4) Extension agent to develop and implement agricultural workforce training workshops and programs

The Cooperative Extension Service is the means by which the Land Grant university system extends the results of research to directly assist agriculture and the public in each state. Among the 50 states, Hawai'i is virtually unique in supporting agricultural research and extension, along with all other university functions, solely through the single budget line of the University of Hawai'i. In recognition of the unique nature of agricultural extension, other states choose to provide a budget line specifically for this core Land Grant activity. In the absence of such a

funding mechanism, extension service functions potentially suffer to a greater extent than other university functions during periods of fiscal austerity.

The extension faculty workforce in the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources has decreased 28% over the past six years, and 43% over the past 20 years. Retirements and resignations are a normal occurrence, but the present budget situation prevents replacement of many vacant positions. University budget reductions and the need to increase tuition revenue does not support extension staffing at optimal levels.

At the same time, the legislature and the people of Hawai'i have an increasing sense of urgency with respect to food security. This includes a need for accelerated training to assist new farmers, with an emphasis on farming practices that will decrease Hawai'i's need for imported and expensive farming inputs.

There is a need for additional extension expertise in the areas defined in SB 1303, and we support the intent of SB 1303 to add extension faculty with that expertise.