



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Written Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Water, Land, and Agriculture
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By

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And

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SB 2137 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Nishihara, and members of the Senate Committee on Water, Land, and Agriculture, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 2137, which appropriates funds to the Department of Agriculture to establish and support on-farm mentoring programs, with successful commercial farmers serving as mentors.

Successful farmers have a great deal to contribute to mentoring the next generation of farmers, but as small businessmen usually cannot afford the time necessary to do this. The intent of this bill, reflecting the desire of the farming community, is to set up a means of grant administration within the Department of Agriculture to support a mentoring program in each county by successful commercial farmers, based on the pilot program developed by the Hawai'i Farmers Union on Maui, as an alternative or adjunct to the more formal and structured educational programs offered by the University of Hawai'i, such as the Go-Farm Hawai'i program directed by the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR) and the community colleges. Although we defer to the Department of Agriculture on the fiscal and management implications of SB 2137, we believe that this is a practical approach for creation and management of a grants program to support on-farm mentoring by working farmers.

Hawai'i needs more successful farmers, and those who are successful certainly have expertise to share. The purpose of the bill is to engage commercial farmers in individualized, on-farm mentoring of new farmers by providing them with a financial incentive to do so. We support the goal of SB 2137 of on-farm mentoring as a path to new farmer success.