



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## Legislative Testimony

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Testimony Presented Before the  
House Committee on Agriculture  
Wednesday, February 12, 2020 at 8:45 a.m.

By  
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And  
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### HB 1894 HD1 – RELATING TO BEGINNING FARMER TRAINING

Chair Creagan, Vice Chair DeCoite, and members of the House Committee on Agriculture:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of the intent with comments on HB 1894 HD1.

We strongly agree that new farmers are needed in Hawai'i to assure that the state has an agricultural future. Therefore, we do not oppose the intent of the bill, but support it. What we are concerned about is listed below:

1. We defer to the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture (HDOA) as to whether they have the ability to handle such a program.
2. The bill does not set up any basic criteria or definition for what is a qualified farmer training provider. This leaves the credentials of programs too open, and can encourage training that includes farming alternatives that are not science-based. This can be remedied by having HDOA or other agency set a definition.
3. A maximum of a one-year training program is a relatively short time that we feel will limit the effectiveness of a successful training program.
4. The measure of success of a training program is the number of graduates that successfully farm, which requires access to farm land. The training program provided should be required to have a path to farmland.
5. The training program should be directed to commercial farming, with the expectation that graduates will be in the business of increasing the supply of local food to more than family and neighbors.
6. We do not understand the limit of \$100,000 per year limit per provider, and how that was derived. If the program is successful, the state will want to fund it more fully and preferentially. The purpose is not to provide jobs for providers, but to provide training/mentoring to new farmers that ultimately has a pathway

to farmland for the new farmer. If we train farmers, but they are not eligible to rent farm land, the program will not be successful.

7. If a training program is successful, then being limited to seek funding only 3 out of 5 years if it received the full \$100,000 each time it was awarded appears contrary to the intent of the bill.

To summarize, we support the intent of the bill because new farmers are needed in the state. However, we feel that the bill does not meet its objective.

Based on the above we support the intent of HB 1894 HD1, but feel the specifics do not meet the objective.