



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## Legislative Testimony

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Testimony Presented Before the  
House Committee on Labor and Public Employment  
Tuesday, February 4, 2020 at 9:10 a.m.

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

Chair Johanson, Vice Chair Eli and members of the House Committee on Labor and Public Employment:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition with comments on HB 1894.

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 oppose is the process for the reasons 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 farmer training program. This leaves the credentials of programs too open, and can encourage training that includes farming alternatives that are not science-based.
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. Using GoFarm as an example, graduates may spend as much as 2 years or more learning the trade.
4. The measure of success of a training program is the number of graduates that successfully farm, which requires access to farm land. Could that be addressed in the bill for graduates of the training programs?
5. We do not understand the limit of \$100,000 per year limit per provider, and how that was derived. If the program is successful, would the state not want to fund it more fully?
6. If a training program is successful, why would it be limited to seek funding only 3 out of 5 years if it received the full \$100,000 each time it was awarded funding?

To summarize, we support the intent of the bill because new farmers are needed in the state. However, we feel that the bill is insufficient in the funding specifics and the openness of what may be considered farmer training programs. If this were to go through and the HDOA is capable of handling the program, then the department should be given the authority to define what are criteria for a fundable training program.

Based on the above we oppose HB 1894 as written.