



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Lower and Higher Education
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And
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HB 2159 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Chair Woodson, Vice Chairs Hashem and Quinlan, and members of the House Committee on Lower and Higher Education:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 2159 relating to agriculture and ornamental ginger and which appropriates funding for statewide research and prevention of the spread of ornamental ginger pathogens. The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM), College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR) supports this bill and we respectfully provide the following information to substantiate our position.

This bill is one of three (3) addressing biosecurity in the ornamental/landscape industry and is an example of the biosecurity issues facing agriculture in Hawai'i. Ornamental ginger is a valued plant that can be used as a shrub or as a cut flower. CTAHR scientists have been able to identify three different viruses and one fungal pathogen that are infecting ornamental ginger. In addition, the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture (HDOA) scientists have identified the presence of fourteen additional pathogens. At this time, it is not known which agent(s) is/are the primary cause of the decline, and which are secondary pathogens infecting a weakened plant.

Research on the disease and survey of its extent continue to be needed. Biosecurity issues like this constantly occur. We never know when they will occur, what will be the scope of the problem, what may be the cause of the problem, and what will be the resulting solution. CTAHR's budget within UHM is not equipped to consistently address such issues. While we have the expertise in both research and extension, the funding is often unavailable.

We support this bill provided that its passage is in addition to and does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in our BOR Approved Budget.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 2159.