



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Lower and Higher Education
Friday, February 7, 2020 at 2:20 p.m.

By
Nicholas Comerford, Dean
College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources
And
Michael Bruno, PhD
Provost
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

HB 2215 – RELATING TO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support with amendments for HB 2215 that seeks to hire a Workforce Development Coordinator in the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture (HDOA) with multiple, well-defined duties related to agriculture education and curriculum.

The College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources was part of the 3-year P-20 Agriculture Education Working Group that submitted their final report last year, and that recommended this position.

The need to get agriculture into the view of students of all ages will be important to the continued development of the agriculture workforce in the state. This bill addresses that need and, most importantly, takes advantage of the grassroots interest in this topic by attempting to coordinate the work of many engaged groups.

We suggest an amendment that changes the responsibility for the position from the HDOA to the Hawai'i Department of Education or the University of Hawai'i. The HDOA does not have responsibility for curriculum development and we believe it does not want to take on a task for which they are not prepared to handle.

Another question to be answered is whether this should be a permanent position or a time-limited position. We suggest that the position be established as time-limited with a 5-year re-evaluation to determine if the desired outcomes have been reached.

We strongly support the intent of HB 2215 and suggest that a discussion be had as to where this program, if funded, will reside.