



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Agriculture
Wednesday, February 2, 2022 at 10:00 a.m.

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HB 1711 – RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

Chair Hashem, Vice-Chair Perruso, and members of the House Committee on Agriculture:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of the intent of HB 1711 relating to the hiring of 3 full-time FTE positions at the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources' (CTAHR) operation on Kaua'i.

The pandemic has had a deleterious effect on the entire University of Hawai'i System, and CTAHR is not an exception. Due to retirements, resignations, and the hiring freeze CTAHR has experienced a decline in faculty and staff numbers.

During this same time, CTAHR has also been engaged in developing a strategic plan with the goal of defining the Grand Challenges for the state that is consistent with our expertise or potential expertise. This plan will determine the college's focus in the next 5-10 years. One outcome from the strategic plan will be a state-wide staffing plan, which will guide requests for hiring to the Mānoa campus administration. This is noted because CTAHR is at a stage where requests for staffing will be developed to align with the college's strategic plan.

There are, however, basic gaps in CTAHR's programs that would be helpful to be filled as the staffing plan is being developed. HB 1711 requests for 3 full-time FTE positions for the Kaua'i Research Station. In response to that request we note:

1. Any position would have to be classified as a permanent position. It can take at least 6-9 months to hire a faculty member, making a position with just annual funding difficult.
2. We currently employ a 4-H Extension Agent on Kaua'i as a temporary hire as this is an important position for the program. This bill would allow us to advertise that position on a permanent basis.

3. The bill requests that one of the positions be a Livestock Extension Agent. During the pandemic we lost the Livestock Agent on Kaua'i to a resignation for personal family reasons. This was one of the positions gained in the 2018 legislative session. We would support the hiring of a Livestock Agent if that was indicated as important in our staffing plan. But we are reluctant to specifically identify any additional position before our strategic planning is completed.
4. Therefore, we would propose that, if the additional two positions were approved, that they be left open as to the nature of the hire until we can identify what would be relevant to the college's strategic positioning and plans for Kaua'i.

In summary, the University of Hawai'i supports the intent of HB 1711 and thanks the supporters of this bill for their consideration of CTAHR. Full-time equivalent, permanent positions could be useful to the Kaua'i Research and Extension program either as Extension Agents, Extension Specialists or Agricultural Technicians. However, CTAHR wishes to identify the nature of these positions based on the on-going strategic planning. CTAHR understands that passage of this bill should not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in our BOR Approved Budget.