



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems
Wednesday, February 7, 2024 at 9:30 a.m.

By

Anna Wieczorek, Interim Dean

Walter Bowen, Associate Dean of Research
College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources

And

Michael Bruno, Provost
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

HB 2138 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

Chair Gates, Vice Chair Kahaloa, and Members of the House Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2138 relating to agriculture education and appropriates funds to the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UH) for the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR), to establish an agriculture education coordinator position.

As mentioned in HB 2138, CTAHR convened the P-20 Agriculture Education Working Group, and the major recommendation contained in the group's final report to the 2019 legislature was the recommendation to appoint an agriculture education coordinator. This bill is a continuing attempt to act on that recommendation. We believe that the work done by the Working Group was highly collaborative and valuable, and that the need for such a program coordinator is justified.

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and natural disasters have demonstrated that the State of Hawai'i must create a more sustainable agriculture industry to support local food production and a diverse agricultural economy.

If HB 2138 is passed and funded, the agriculture education coordinator will work across the UH system, including our Community Colleges, Hawai'i Department of Education, and other members representing the original Working Group.

Better coordination of existing agriculture education programs across the State will provide a diversity of educational options to meet Hawai'i's needs to "grow more farmers".

Furthermore, by working together we will be able to increase the number of people in our State who will have the professional and technical skills to pursue employment opportunities in food and agriculture.

In summary, the University of Hawai'i CTAHR supports HB 2138 provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in our Board of Regents approved budget.