



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 Higher Education
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By

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And

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HB 843 – RELATING TO THE COLLEGE OF TROPICAL AGRICULTURE AND HUMAN RESILIENCE

Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 843 relating to the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience (CTAHR) which appropriates funds for critical repairs, maintenance, demolition, design, and construction for facilities at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, and establishes and appropriates funds for positions within the University of Hawai'i for CTAHR.

SECTION 2. (1) CTAHR appreciates the purpose of HB 843 which authorizes the issuance of general obligation bonds in the sum of \$5,000,000 for fiscal year 2025-2026 for CIP at the Waimānalo research station. The Waimānalo CARES (CTAHR Agricultural Research and Extension Stations) Center is part of a statewide network of CARES centers that provides crucial support for local farmers, ranchers, and the local community conducting agricultural research, Extension and 'āina based educational activities from K-12 to graduate levels for the public good. There is a new opportunity presented by the adjacency of the former Meadow Gold Dairies (MGD) land to the Waimānalo research station. CTAHR now manages the MGD under a Right of Entry with DLNR, and CTAHR would like to build a state-of-the-art animal science teaching, research, and Extension facility to expand field research and the GoFarm program to meet food self-sufficiency goals, and obtain national accreditation for its Animal Science undergraduate program. The request includes the Phase 1 of the redesign of MGD land at the Waimānalo research station.

SECTION 2. (2) A \$6,000,000 investment is needed to build and start the 5,000-square-foot Controlled Environment Agriculture (CEA) Innovation Farm at CTAHR with commercial production, research and teaching capabilities. CEA offers a viable solution by enabling year-round food production with higher yields with less land, water, fertilizer, and pesticides, and greater resilience against natural disasters posed by climate

change. CTAHR in collaboration with the UH College of Engineering and MetroGrow, will build the CEA Innovation Farm that will produce food for the Hawai'i Department of Education's Regional Kitchens and develop, test, and demonstrate innovations in adaptive infrastructure and technology, precision agriculture and data driven controls, germplasm development and pest management, and commercial demonstration and workforce development.

SECTION 3. CTAHR's agricultural research and extension stations (CARES) provide crucial support for local farmers, ranchers, and communities, and its research and extension operations are hampered by a lack of permanent agricultural technician positions. These eight full-time equivalent (8.0 FTE) agricultural technicians are essential for conducting field experiments, demonstrating best farming practices, and the upkeep of station facilities and equipment. Four full-time equivalent (4.0 FTE) community coordinator positions facilitate the development of CARES as hubs of collaborative innovation and community prosperity through authentic Talk Stories. Increasing technical and support staff for Extension agents increases the devotion of more time to educating and mentoring farmers and the communities around the CARES centers statewide. The additional eight full-time equivalent (8.0 FTE) administrative, professional, technical (APT) positions for CTAHR will provide rapid farmer support services including plant disease diagnostics, soil analysis, tissue culture for clean plant material, and seed production for Hawaii-specific plant varieties.

We appreciate the comprehensive vision of the measure for CTAHR to assist the State to reach its food sustainability goals by 2050. We support HB 843 provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in our BOR Approved Budget. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.