



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Higher Education
and
Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment
Tuesday, February 11, 2020 at 3:00 p.m.

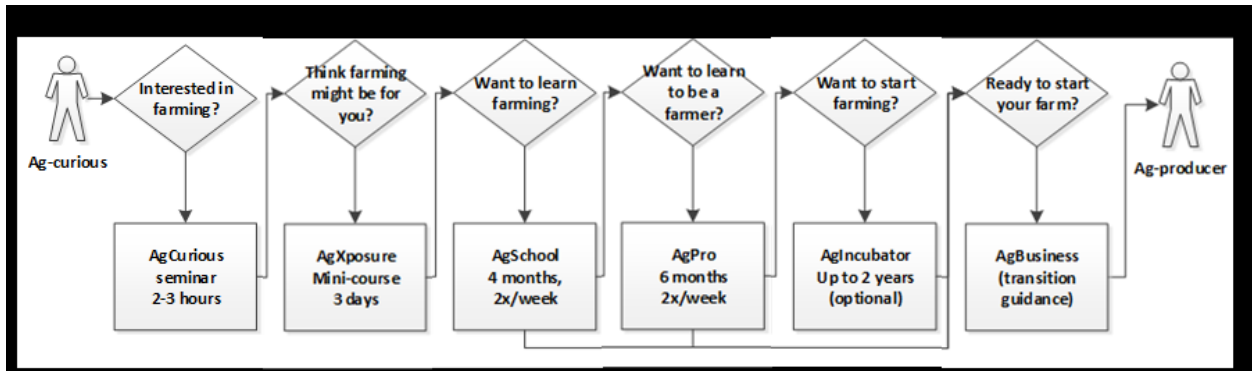
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SB 2723 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Chairs Kim and Gabbard, Vice Chairs Kidani and Ruderman, and members of the Senate Committee on Higher Education and Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 2723 that seeks to fund the GoFarm Hawai'i program. The average age of a farmer in Hawai'i is about 60 years, thus, there is a need to train future farmers for Hawai'i, but where the future farmers will come from is unclear. The College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR) trains students for 4-year degrees in Horticulture, Soil Science, Entomology, Plant Pathology and Animal Science. CTAHR students typically do not go into farming, per se; but are the scientists trained to support agriculture. Of course, they have the skills to farm if they wish, but most do not consider this their future.

The GoFarm Hawai'i program is a fully grant funded, non-degree granting program associated with CTAHR. It is a successful program and its success is based on how the program is organized. The program accepts anyone interested in developing the skills to farm and offers a series of sequential programs that allows participants to proceed through the programs based on their level of interest. Below is a diagram of the series of sequential programs offered by GoFarm Hawai'i, beginning with AgCurious and culminating with AgBusiness.



This bill does an excellent job of outlining the success of this program, which we will not reproduce here. The program has a high rate of success as measured by the number of participants that proceed to farm on their own land, or work on farms. GoFarm Hawai'i has also expanded its program to meet special needs. One example is working with prison inmates to train them to be Agricultural Technicians, with the hope of reducing recidivism.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 2723 provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in our BOR Approved Budget.