



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Higher Education
and
Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment
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SB 2784 – 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 2784 relating to agriculture and ornamental ginger which appropriates funding to the University of Hawai'i College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR) for statewide research and prevention of the spread of ornamental ginger pathogens. CTAHR respectfully provides the following information to substantiate our position.

This bill is one of three (3) addressing biosecurity in the ornamental/landscape industry and is an example of the biosecurity issues facing agriculture in Hawai'i. Ornamental ginger is a valued plant that can be used as a shrub or as a cut flower. CTAHR scientists have been able to identify three different viruses and one fungal pathogen that are infecting ornamental ginger. In addition, the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture scientists have identified the presence of fourteen additional pathogens. At this time, it is not known which agent(s) is/are the primary cause of the decline, and which are secondary pathogens infecting a weakened plant.

Research on the disease and survey of its extent continue to be needed. Biosecurity issues like this constantly occur. We never know when they will occur, what will be the scope of the problem, what may be the cause of the problem, and what will be the resulting solution. CTAHR's budget within UHM is not equipped to consistently address such issues. While we have the expertise in both research and extension, the funding is often unavailable.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support this bill provided that its passage is in addition to and does not replace or adversely impact priorities in the University of Hawai'i as indicated in our BOR Approved Budget.