



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Thursday, February 20, 2020 at 1:00 p.m.

By
Nicholas Comerford
Dean, College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources
And
Michael Bruno
Provost
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

SB 2784 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means:

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 of SB 2784 provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities in our BOR Approved Budget.