



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 Finance
Tuesday, February 25, 2025 at 2:00 p.m.

By

Parwinder Grewal, Dean
College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience

And

Michael Bruno, Provost
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

HB 1337 HD1 – RELATED TO ENDEMIC PLANTS

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of the intent of HB 1337 HD1 relating to endemic plants which requires the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience (CTAHR) to establish an endemic plant seed bank pilot program to preserve and promote the planting of plant species that are endemic to Hawai'i.

We support the intent of this bill and respectfully offer the following comments. CTAHR currently has a small seed production program focused exclusively on agriculturally important crop varieties. CTAHR also has interest in preserving and promoting endemic plant species and has recently received a grant to produce mix plant species seeds of native plants to support reforestation efforts following wildfires. To establish the proposed endemic plant species seed bank, CTAHR has the land and expertise to produce the seed but would need lab, greenhouse, and storage facilities and staff positions. CTAHR recently learned that there are possibly 5 seed banks in the State that work with endemic and rare native plant collections. Because of this information, CTAHR respectfully suggests that the purpose of the bill be amended to a pilot study to bring the various seed bank partners together to develop a plan to build a large storage facility for the restoration process of endemic plants. This facility would serve as a hub/central agency to produce and store large quantities of seed for landscape reforestation with endemic native plants.

We support the intent of HB 1337 HD1 with comments, provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in our BOR Approved Budget. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII'
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA

P.O. BOX 621
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

DAWN N.S. CHANG
CHAIRPERSON
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
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FIRST DEPUTY

CIARA W.K. KAHAHANE
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AQUATIC RESOURCES
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION
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FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

Testimony of
DAWN N. S. CHANG
Chairperson

Before the House Committee on
FINANCE

Tuesday, February 25, 2025
2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 308 and Via Videoconference

In consideration of
HOUSE BILL 1337, HOUSE DRAFT 1
RELATING TO ENDEMIC PLANTS

House Bill 1337, House Draft 1 requires the University of Hawai'i to establish an endemic plant seed bank pilot program to preserve and promote the planting of plant species that are endemic to Hawai'i. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports this bill.**

Seed banks are critical for providing a safe place to hold large volumes of seeds stored in low-humidity environments until needed. The Department's Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW) supports investments in seed banks across the state to enable plant conservation and restoration and to create resilient landscapes with a coordinated strategy. Recently, much of the focus at DOFAW has been on ways to increase statewide nursery and seed banking capacity to meet future needs. The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa's Lyon Arboretum currently has an endemic seed bank. DOFAW supports expanding ongoing efforts at the University of Hawai'i to coordinate with others working in this arena.

Restoration of degraded ecosystems and rehabilitation of landscapes after wildfire in Hawai'i requires large amounts of locally adapted native plant seed. Restoration practitioners on all islands have confirmed that access to locally adapted plant materials is a major limiting factor for their projects. Ongoing research has shown that the seeds of most Hawaiian plants can be stored in seed banks for years until they are needed. Investments in locating source populations in remote areas, securing seed collections in seed banks, and marshaling the resources to plant the right seeds at the right time in the right place are urgently needed in many of Hawai'i's conservation institutions.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

BIISC
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February 21, 2025

Hearing: House Committee on Finance

RE: HB1337

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee,

The Big Island Invasive Species Committee would like to express strong support for HB1337, which requires the University of Hawai'i to establish an endemic plant seed bank pilot program to preserve and promote the planting of plant species that are endemic to Hawai'i. This initiative is a critical step toward conserving and restoring the unique native flora in Hawai'i, many of which are at risk due to habitat destruction, wildfires, climate change, and the spread of invasive species.

Seed banking is an essential conservation tool that allows us to store and preserve plant genetic material for future use. We can protect species from extinction and enhance efforts to restore degraded habitats by collecting and properly storing native seeds. A native seed bank is akin to an insurance policy ensuring restoration practices can endure, even after catastrophic events like the Lahaina wildfires. After a tragedy on that scale, it is crucial to sow native seeds where invasive grasses and plants once grew to stabilize the soil, reduce runoff into the oceans, and promote aquifer recharging. However, Hawai'i did not have a bank of seeds from Maui, and the invasive species took back control of the landscape.

Furthermore, seed banking can protect a species from extinction. Many endemic species, such as *Kanaloa kahoowalensis*, are extinct in the wild and only exist in cultivation thanks to conservation efforts.

Ecosystem loss and climate change will continue, making it harder to harvest wild seeds sustainably. Therefore, the time to begin seed banking is now. HB1337 will greatly help safeguard the rich botanical heritage in Hawai'i. Thank you for your time and dedication to preserving our natural resources.

Franny Kinslow Brewer
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February 25, 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

**TESTIMONY ON HB 1337, HD1
RELATING TO ENDEMIC PLANTS**

Conference Room 308 & Videoconference
2:00 PM

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice-Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

I am Brian Miyamoto, Executive Director of the Hawai'i Farm Bureau (HFB). Organized since 1948, the HFB is comprised of 1,800 farm family members statewide and serves as Hawai'i's voice of agriculture to protect, advocate, and advance the social, economic, and educational interests of our diverse agricultural community.

The Hawai'i Farm Bureau supports HB 1337, HD1, which requires the University of Hawai'i College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience to establish an endemic plant seed bank pilot program to preserve and promote the planting of plant species that are endemic to Hawai'i.

Hawai'i's unique ecosystem is home to many endemic plant species that are found nowhere else in the world. These plants play a critical role in preserving biodiversity, preventing erosion, and maintaining the health of Hawai'i's environment. However, many endemic species are threatened by habitat loss, climate change, and invasive species, making conservation efforts increasingly urgent.

Establishing a seed bank program will help ensure that Hawai'i's endemic plants are preserved for future generations. By collecting, storing, and propagating seeds from native plant species, this program will create a valuable resource for conservationists, land managers, farmers, and researchers. Additionally, promoting the planting of endemic species can enhance reforestation efforts, support watershed restoration, and contribute to the long-term sustainability of Hawai'i's natural and agricultural landscapes.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important matter.

HB-1337-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 8:17:00 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joshua Fujinaka	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Feb 24, 2025

Dear members of the committee,

I am testifying in support of House Bill 1337. This relates to the push for UH Manoa to establish an endemic plant seed bank pilot program. With this program they will preserve and promote the planting of species that are endemic to Hawaii. It is important to care for endemic plants because they maintain our native ecosystem's health and sustains life on our island. Without a healthy amount of endemic plants, it can lead to habitat loss and can cause changes in climate and worse. If we create this program, we can preserve and protect these important plants for our island for the better.

HB-1337-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 9:52:38 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jordyn Redona	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair

Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

House Committee on Finance

Sunday, February 25, 2025

2:00 PM, House conference room 308

Hawaii State Capitol

Support for H.B. No.1337

Aloha, Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and the members of the House Committee on Finance,

My name is Jordyn Redona and I am a student at Mililani High School. I am testifying in support of H.B. No.1337.

I am testifying in support of the University of Hawaii at Manoa College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience establishing an endemic plant seed bank program in order to preserve, protect, and promote endemic native plants of the Hawaiian islands. Because of current environmental issues that we are having due to increasing human activity, there have been risks to the sustainability of the native plants of old Hawai'i which make up our culture, traditions, and connect us together. The stories behind each plant and the significance of them in old Hawaiian culture is what is used to educate the local and

native youth to connect us to where we are born, raised, and rooted. Without these traditional stories and education, we would lose who we are and our identity. With modern technology advancing and human activity getting worse, these are the times to start taking serious action in order to preserve traditional culture and protect what keeps the islands old. These plants are used for education, lei making, and other traditions that keep the culture of Hawai'i alive.

I hope you consider passing H.B. No. 1337 because it is significant in sustaining old Hawai'i, keeping our traditions, maintaining our culture, and keeping the people tight knit. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify for this issue.

Sincerely,

Jordyn Redona

Mililani High School

Testimony on Bill HB1337 - Relating to Endemic Plants

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Alexander Mida, and I am a senior at Mililani High School. I am writing to express my strong support for HB1337, which focuses on the protection and conservation of Hawaii's endemic plants. This bill is a critical step toward preserving the unique biodiversity of our islands, which is not only a natural treasure but also a vital part of our cultural heritage and environmental health.

Hawaii is home to some of the most unique and diverse plant species in the world, many of which are found nowhere else on Earth. These endemic plants are integral to our ecosystems, providing habitat for native wildlife, stabilizing soil, and maintaining water cycles. However, many of these species are under threat due to habitat destruction, invasive species, climate change, and other human activities. HB1337 addresses these challenges by providing necessary resources and frameworks for the conservation and restoration of these irreplaceable plants.

Protecting Hawaii's endemic plants is not just an environmental issue; it is also a matter of cultural preservation. Many native plants hold significant cultural value, being used in traditional practices, medicine, and ceremonies. By safeguarding these species through seed banks, we are also preserving the knowledge and traditions that have been passed down through generations.

In conclusion, I urge the committee to pass HB1337. This bill represents a proactive and necessary approach to conserving Hawaii's unique flora, ensuring that future generations can continue to benefit from the beauty and richness of our natural environment. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony in support of this important legislation.

Mahalo,
Alexander Mida
Mililani High School

HB-1337-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 1:56:36 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Hayden	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hearing Date: February 25, 2025

Committee: House Committee on Finance

Submitted by: Hayden Kochi

Position: Support

Dear Chair Kyle T. Yamashita, Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee,

Aloha, my name is Hayden Kochi and I'm a junior at Mililani High School. I am writing in strong support of HB1337, which would establish an Endemic Plant Seed Bank Pilot Program at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa's College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience. As someone who was born and raised in Hawai'i, I have always felt a deep connection to the 'āina. Our land, forests, and native ecosystems are not just part of our environment—they are part of who we are as a people. We depend on them for clean air, fresh water, and the very identity that makes Hawai'i so special.

Native plants are the foundation of our island ecosystems, supporting everything from native birds to healthy watersheds. However, they are disappearing at an alarming rate due to habitat loss, invasive species, and climate change. Without urgent action, we risk losing the very species that sustain our forests and our way of life. By creating a seed bank dedicated to preserving and restoring Hawai'i's endemic plants, this bill takes a critical step toward protecting our natural heritage for future generations.

The time to act is now. If we do not invest in conservation efforts like this, we risk losing the rich biodiversity that makes Hawai'i unique. I urge you to pass HB1337 to ensure that our forests, our water, and our connection to the 'āina remain strong for generations to come.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Hayden Kochi

HB-1337-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 3:56:21 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Clay Trauernicht	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

To Chairs Yamashita and Takenouchi and Distinguished Members of the Committee,

I am submitting testimony in support of HB 1377. I am Extension Faculty at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa where I have worked on wildfire management and native ecosystem restoration since 2013. I am submitting this particular written testimony as an individual and not on direct behalf of the University.

Seed storage is a critical component to ecosystem restoration and conservation in Hawai'i. Existing seed storage efforts, however, have largely focused on rare species. There is a huge need for acquiring and storing seeds of common native plants which provide the backbone for creating habitat and restoring forests in areas that have been impacted by invasive species and/or disasters like wildfire and storms . In partnership with several other conservation organizations, my extension program has collectively raised nearly \$10 million to collect wild seed and use them to develop large-scale native plant material production through seed farms. All of this support, however, is from federal funds, which are currently in jeopardy of delay or potential cancellation. This bill represents a potentially major contribution and commitment of state resources that would not only ensure that these efforts can move forward, but also provide complementary capacity to demonstrate how to effectively store the seeds that these other projects will acquire for future use for the benefit of conservation efforts in Hawai'i.

Clay Trauernicht

HB-1337-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 7:22:12 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lauren Johnson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair

Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

House Committee on Finance

Tuesday, February 25, 2025

2:00 p.m. VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Conference Room 308

Hawaii State Capitol

Support for HB1337

Aloha, Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the House Committee on Finance,

My name is Lauren Johnson, and I am a senior at Mililani High School. I am writing in strong support of HB1337, which would establish an endemic plant seed bank pilot program.

Through my own research on native Hawaiian plants, I have seen how habitat loss, invasive species, and climate change threaten our ecosystems. Preserving endemic plants is

essential not only for maintaining biodiversity but also for protecting Hawaii's cultural and environmental heritage. A dedicated seed bank would provide a crucial safeguard against species loss while supporting restoration efforts across the state.

This initiative is an important step toward ensuring the long-term survival of Hawaii's native plants. I urge you to pass HB1337 and invest in the future of our environment. Thank you for the opportunity to testify and consider.

Sincerely,

Lauren Johnson

Mililani High School

laurenjohnson3100@gmail.com