



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
February 12, 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 Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, 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.

We support the intent of HB 1337 HD1 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
MANAGEMENT

RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE
FIRST DEPUTY

CIARA W.K. KAHAHANE
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

AQUATIC RESOURCES
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT
CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS
CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES
ENFORCEMENT
ENGINEERING
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

Testimony of
DAWN N. S. CHANG
Chairperson

Before the House Committee on
HIGHER EDUCATION

Wednesday, February 12, 2025
2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 309 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.



P.O. Box 253, Kunia, Hawai'i 96759
Phone: (808) 848-2074; Fax: (808) 848-1921
e-mail info@hfbf.org; www.hfbf.org

February 12, 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

TESTIMONY ON HB 1337, HD1
RELATING TO ENDEMIC PLANTS

Conference Room 309 & Videoconference
2:00 PM

Aloha Chair Garrett, Vice-Chair Amato, 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.

BIISC
23 E. Kawili St.
Hilo, HI 96720
(808) 933-3340
www.biisc.org



February 11, 2025

Hearing: House Committee on Higher Education

RE: HB1337

Aloha Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, 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 kahoowaleensis*, 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
Program Manager
fbrewer@hawaii.edu
(808) 933-3340

HB-1337-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/8/2025 10:55:02 AM

Testimony for HED on 2/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Douglas Perrine	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The shortage of native plant seeds to replant areas devastated by the Maui wildfires should serve as a red flag warning that we need to establish seed banks on all our islands to increase the resilience of our native landscapes, especially with regards to endemic plants, which are subject to extinction. I strongly support HB1337.