



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 7, 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 843 – RELATING TO THE COLLEGE OF TROPICAL AGRICULTURE AND HUMAN RESILIENCE

Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 843 relating to the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience (CTAHR) which appropriates funds for critical repairs, maintenance, demolition, design, and construction for facilities at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, and establishes and appropriates funds for positions within the University of Hawai'i for CTAHR.

SECTION 2. (1) CTAHR appreciates the purpose of HB 843 which authorizes the issuance of general obligation bonds in the sum of \$5,000,000 for fiscal year 2025-2026 for CIP at the Waimānalo research station. The Waimānalo CARES (CTAHR Agricultural Research and Extension Stations) Center is part of a statewide network of CARES centers that provides crucial support for local farmers, ranchers, and the local community conducting agricultural research, Extension and 'āina based educational activities from K-12 to graduate levels for the public good. There is a new opportunity presented by the adjacency of the former Meadow Gold Dairies (MGD) land to the Waimānalo research station. CTAHR now manages the MGD under a Right of Entry with DLNR, and CTAHR would like to build a state-of-the-art animal science teaching, research, and Extension facility to expand field research and the GoFarm program to meet food self-sufficiency goals, and obtain national accreditation for its Animal Science undergraduate program. The request includes the Phase 1 of the redesign of MGD land at the Waimānalo research station.

SECTION 2. (2) A \$6,000,000 investment is needed to build and start the 5,000-square-foot Controlled Environment Agriculture (CEA) Innovation Farm at CTAHR with commercial production, research and teaching capabilities. CEA offers a viable solution by enabling year-round food production with higher yields with less land, water, fertilizer, and pesticides, and greater resilience against natural disasters posed by climate

change. CTAHR in collaboration with the UH College of Engineering and MetroGrow, will build the CEA Innovation Farm that will produce food for the Hawai'i Department of Education's Regional Kitchens and develop, test, and demonstrate innovations in adaptive infrastructure and technology, precision agriculture and data driven controls, germplasm development and pest management, and commercial demonstration and workforce development.

SECTION 3. CTAHR's agricultural research and extension stations (CARES) provide crucial support for local farmers, ranchers, and communities, and its research and extension operations are hampered by a lack of permanent agricultural technician positions. These eight full-time equivalent (8.0 FTE) agricultural technicians are essential for conducting field experiments, demonstrating best farming practices, and the upkeep of station facilities and equipment. Four full-time equivalent (4.0 FTE) community coordinator positions facilitate the development of CARES as hubs of collaborative innovation and community prosperity through authentic Talk Stories. Increasing technical and support staff for Extension agents increases the devotion of more time to educating and mentoring farmers and the communities around the CARES centers statewide. The additional eight full-time equivalent (8.0 FTE) administrative, professional, technical (APT) positions for CTAHR will provide rapid farmer support services including plant disease diagnostics, soil analysis, tissue culture for clean plant material, and seed production for Hawaii-specific plant varieties.

We appreciate the comprehensive vision of the measure for CTAHR to assist the State to reach its food sustainability goals by 2050. We support HB 843 provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in our BOR Approved Budget. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.



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February 7, 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

TESTIMONY ON HB 843
RELATING TO THE COLLEGE OF TROPICAL AGRICULTURE AND HUMAN
RESILIENCE

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, Bachman Hall,
Board of Regents Conference Room 106 & 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 843, which appropriates funds for critical repairs, maintenance, demolition, design, and construction for facilities at the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience (CTAHR) at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. The bill also establishes and funds positions within the University of Hawai'i for CTAHR, combining elements of SB 663 and SB 672 into a single measure.

The work performed by CTAHR is essential to the success of Hawai'i's farmers and ranchers. Its research, extension services, and educational programs support agricultural innovation, sustainable farming practices, and workforce development. Farmers rely on CTAHR for guidance on pest and disease management, soil health, crop improvement, and climate resilience. However, to continue fulfilling this mission, CTAHR needs adequate funding for both personnel and infrastructure.

HB 843 funds agricultural technician positions and community coordinator positions to support CTAHR's Agricultural Research and Extension Stations (CARES). These positions are crucial for maintaining experimental and demonstration plant and animal trials, engaging communities in agricultural education, and strengthening CTAHR's ability to serve local farmers. Expanding the capacity of CTAHR's research and outreach programs will directly benefit Hawai'i's agricultural industry by providing timely, science-based solutions to farmers' and ranchers' challenges.

The bill also provides capital improvement funds for repairing, maintaining, and demolishing buildings at the Waimānalo Research Station. As part of a statewide network of agricultural experimental stations, the Waimānalo facility plays a key role in agricultural research and farmer education. It supports research on specialty crops, tropical fruits, sustainable farming techniques, and organic production. Unfortunately, many of the station's facilities are deteriorating and need repair. Without modernization, the station's ability to support Hawai'i's agricultural community will be severely limited. Upgrading critical infrastructure will enhance research opportunities, attract external funding, and improve outreach to local farmers and ranchers.

We urge the committee to pass HB 843 to ensure that CTAHR has the resources necessary to continue its vital work in supporting Hawai'i's agricultural industry. Investing in personnel and infrastructure at CTAHR will strengthen local food production, promote sustainable agriculture, and enhance the resilience of Hawai'i's farming community.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



Testimony of
MetroGrow Hawaii
Kerry Kakazu, Ph.D., President

To the
COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION
Representative Andrew Takuya, Chair
Representative Terez Amato, Vice Chair

DATE: Friday, February 7, 2025

TIME: 2:00 PM

PLACE: University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, Bachman Hall
Board of Regents Conference Room 106
2444 Dole Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96822

Chairs Takuya and Members of the Committee:

Measure: HB 843

Title: RELATING TO THE COLLEGE OF TROPICAL AGRICULTURE AND HUMAN RESILIENCE.

Description: Appropriates funds for critical repairs, maintenance, demolition, design, and construction for facilities of the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. Establishes and appropriates funds for positions within the University of Hawaii for the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience.

Position: MetroGrow Hawaii is in strong support of this measure.

Testimony: I am very pleased to offer testimony in support of this measure to assist the University of Hawai'i and its College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience (CTAHR) to address its facilities and personnel challenges. In recognition of the State's goals to support agriculture and build food self-sufficiency and security, a strong research, education and outreach program is essential. CTAHR is poised to be the leader of these endeavors, but will need the financial resources to accomplish its goals.

I have recently had the honor to join the CTAHR Dean's Advisory Council and have been very impressed with College's recent efforts to better engage with the agricultural community in support of our state's food systems. As the president of MetroGrow Hawaii, the first indoor, vertical, controlled environment farm in Hawai'i, I am especially excited by the proposed upgrades to the Magoon research station near the Manoa campus. The upgrade calls for the establishment of a controlled environment agriculture facility to conduct research, education and outreach by the faculty, students and staff of the college. The facility will also house a commercial scale vegetable production facility that can supply produce to the planned DOE regional kitchen, other institutions and food banks.

The willingness of CTAHR to partner with businesses like MetroGrow Hawaii demonstrates its commitment to extend the efforts beyond just an academic endeavor. Controlled environment agriculture is a growing part of the agricultural landscape in the U.S. and globally and many universities have well-recognized programs focusing on these technologies that can grow crops consistently independent of weather conditions, with a fraction of the land and water of traditional farming and without harmful chemicals all while protecting the environment and the health of consumers. Hawai'i has some unique environmental and economic characteristics from the U.S. continent, so it provides a unique opportunity for CTAHR to add to the knowledge base of controlled environment agriculture.

I ask that you consider the requests for the Magoon upgrade as well as requests for the Waimanalo research station and support positions for full funding to allow CTAHR to implement its strategic plans for our food future.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kerry Kakazu". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kerry" and last name "Kakazu" clearly distinguishable.

Kerry Kakazu, Ph.D.

President, MetroGrow Hawaii



MAUI COUNTY FARM BUREAU

PO Box 148, Kula, HI 96790
mauicountyfarmbureau.org

February 6, 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

**TESTIMONY ON HB 843
RELATING TO THE COLLEGE OF TROPICAL AGRICULTURE AND
HUMAN RESILIENCE.**

VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, Bachman Hall
Board of Regents Conference Room 106
Feb 7, 2025 2:00 pm

Aloha Chair Takuya, Vice Chair Amato, and Members of the Committee:

Maui County Farm Bureau, on behalf of its member farmers, ranchers and agricultural organizations strongly supports HB843, providing critical resources to facilitate the process to rebuild the University of Hawaii College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience (CTAHR) to meet the needs of Hawaii's agriculture.

University of Hawaii is a Land Grant institution, originated to build agriculture to support Hawaii's communities. It has a proud history as a leader in Tropical Agriculture. However, over the years other priorities have shadowed CTAHR's need to keep pace with the changing world, leaving it challenged to meet the needs of students and Hawaii's community. There is an outpouring demand for increased self sufficiency and environmental protection across the State. Agriculture is a core value to achieving the measures to address these demands.

HB843 is a critical step to rebuilding CTAHR to not just rebuild agriculture but to strengthen Hawaii. It seeks to:

- 1) Rebuild the Magoon Research Station into a Tropical Plant Improvement Center, critical to the development of plants uniquely suited to Hawaii's environment and provide growers with a competitive edge in the market place. In its' prime, Magoon was the primary home to the development of hybrids that put Hawaii's floriculture industry in the world's center stage. This effort will bring the latest technological developments to Hawaii to assist in the breeding process.
- 2) Funds to begin the process to evolve the Waimanalo Research Station as a hub for collaborative innovation to drive Hawaii's effort to increased food self sufficiency and community prosperity. This will be an important site to grow our future farmers and ranchers.

This is the first step in Hawaii's commitment to support the regrowth of its' agriculture to meet the needs of the community today and into the future while protecting the natural resources it depends on.

Your support for this measure is critical to demonstrating that the Legislature is committed to the fundamental requirement to meet the needs of the people of Hawaii. This measure is core to addressing many of the requests in the hundreds of measures before you. If there are any questions please contact myself at warrenmcfb@gmail.com or 8082879718. Thank you.