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Governor

SYLVIA LUKE
Lt. Governor



SHARON HURD
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

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TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2023
9:00 AM
CONFERENCE ROOM 325

HOUSE BILL NO. 1182
RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Chairperson Gates and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 1182. This bill appropriates funds to the department of agriculture for the preparation of an environmental impact statement to drill a non-potable water well on individual parcels at Panaewa agricultural park. The Department of Agriculture respectfully opposes this measure.

The lease rent is based on unimproved, vacant land (lowest possible) and therefor all individual, on property, infrastructure improvements are the responsibility of the lessee. Appropriating public funds for an individual's use is an inappropriate use of said funds. The Department respectfully suggests that grant funding be explored should the legislature desire to assist individuals. Additionally, we respectfully note that this Park is served by the County of Hawaii's Department of Water Supply, who gives a substantial discount for agricultural use.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.





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February 15, 2023

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

TESTIMONY ON HB 1182
RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Conference Room 325 & Videoconference
9:00 AM

Aloha Chair Gates, Vice-Chair Kahaloa, 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 1182, which appropriates funds to the department of agriculture for the preparation of an environmental impact statement to drill a non-potable water wells on individual parcels at Panaewa agricultural park.

Affordable and reliable water for irrigation is a basic requirement for sustainable agriculture. Across the country, irrigation systems are heavily subsidized. Hawaii's farmers face expenses far beyond that of their continental or foreign counterparts due to input costs, utility costs, and water. There is no doubt that water infrastructure development has lagged behind the needs of population growth across the State. In addition to new development, repair, and maintenance of aging infrastructure also need to be addressed. In addition to those meeting potable water needs, there is an equal need to address irrigation and other water requirements associated with agriculture.

Without affordable and reliable water for irrigation, Hawaii cannot sustain its farms. Although our State goals and policies encourage agriculture, farming is a difficult business, and water access continues to be a significant hurdle.

It is well-known that the requirements of the environmental impact statement law, while important, can delay beneficial projects until they are no longer feasible. In addition, the enormous cost of hiring consultants to conduct these reviews and provide reports can also preclude farmers from using land they own or lease.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought a renewed awareness of the critical importance of growing food and other agricultural products. It has highlighted the need for our islands to become more self-sufficient. This bill will facilitate the achievement of those goals and

our constitutional mandate because although water is essential for farming, it is not currently available to all agricultural lands that could be productive.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this measure.