



**WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA
THIRTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE, 2023**

ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:
S.B. NO. 782, S.D. 1, RELATING TO TARO.

BEFORE THE:
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

DATE: Thursday, March 2, 2023 **TIME:** 10:00 a.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 211

TESTIFIER(S): **WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY.**
(For more information, contact Jodi K. Yi,
Deputy Attorney General, at (808) 586-1195)

Chair Dela Cruz and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Attorney General provides the following comments regarding this bill.

This bill would appropriate money and establish within the Department of Agriculture a grant program to assist taro farmers. The purpose of the grants is to assist farmers in meeting the costs of cultivating taro for consumption. (Page 3, line 21 to page 4, line 2.)

The grant program would be subject to article VII, section 4, of the Constitution of the State of Hawaii, which provides, "[n]o grant of public money or property shall be made except pursuant to standards provided by law." This bill does not appear to contain sufficient standards for grants of public money. Therefore, we recommend that this bill be amended to insert appropriate standards. Examples of existing statutes that provide standards for agencies to issue grants are found in part II of chapter 9 and sections 10-17, 210D-11, and 383-128, Hawaii Revised Statutes. Additionally, we have attached draft standards to this testimony as a sample to work from and we are happy to work with you on developing more specific standards.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony.

POSSIBLE STANDARDS FOR THE GRANTS IN THIS BILL

- (1) Any grant shall be used exclusively for the purposes of this program.
- (2) The applicant shall submit to the department a substantive plan for increasing taro production, including activities that the applicant intends to engage in with granted funds.
- (3) The applicant shall comply with all applicable federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination against any person on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, creed, sex, age, sexual orientation, disability, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal or state law.
- (4) The grant shall not be used for purposes of entertainment or perquisites.
- (5) The applicant shall comply with other requirements as the department may prescribe.
- (6) All activities undertaken with funds received shall comply with all applicable federal, state, and county statutes and ordinances.
- (7) The applicant shall indemnify and save harmless the State of Hawaii and its officers, agents, and employees from and against any and all claims arising out of or resulting from activities carried out or projects undertaken with funds provided hereunder, and procure sufficient insurance to provide this indemnification if requested to do so by the department.
- (8) The applicant shall agree to make available to the department all records the applicant may have relating to the grant, to allow state agencies to monitor the applicant's compliance with this section.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

SYLVIA LUKE
Lt. Governor



SHARON HURD
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

MORRIS M. ATTA
Deputy to the Chairperson

State of Hawai'i
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
KA 'OIHANA MAHI'AI
1428 South King Street
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96814-2512
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**TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

**THURSDAY, MARCH 2, 2023
10:00 A.M.**

CONFERENCE ROOM 211 AND VIDEO CONFERENCING

**SENATE BILL NO. 782 SD1
RELATING TO TARO**

Chairperson Dela Cruz and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on Senate Bill 782 SD1. This bill appropriates funds to the Department of Agriculture to provide grants to Hawaii farming groups to be dispersed to taro farmers. The Department fully supports this measure.

The Department acknowledges the critical importance of protecting and perpetuating the traditional practice of taro farming as part of Hawaii's cultural identity and further appreciates this legislative effort to help taro farmers in meeting the cost of cultivating taro for local consumption.

Thank you for your consideration and the opportunity to testify on this measure.



RICHARD T. BISSEN, JR.
Mayor

KEKUHAUPIO R. AKANA
Acting Managing Director



LATE



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
COUNTY OF MAUI
200 SOUTH HIGH STREET
WAILUKU, MAUI, HAWAII 96793
www.mauicounty.gov

March 1, 2023

TO: Honorable Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Honorable Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

FROM: Richard T. Bissen, Jr., Mayor
Rogerene K.M. Arce, Director of Agriculture

DATE: March 1, 2023

SUBJECT: **SUPPORT OF SB782 SD1, RELATING TO TARO**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **SUPPORT** of this important measure. The purpose of this measure is to appropriate funds to the department of agriculture to provide grants to Hawaii farming groups to be disbursed to taro farmers.

Our administration **SUPPORTS** this measure for the following reasons:

1. Taro is a culturally important staple starch to Native Hawaiians and a high yielding crop that is underproduced in Hawai'i. This measure will contribute to increasing the cultivation and industry of taro in Hawai'i.
2. Taro is a highly resilient crop that can withstand flood events, storms, and hurricanes which makes it a good source during times of food shortages.
3. Funding to improve accessibility to land, water, mentoring and for incentives to make farming taro affordable is needed. This measure will support the growth of taro farming in Hawai'i, and contribute to the preservation of an essential cultural practice.

For the foregoing reasons, we offer our **SUPPORT** of this measure.



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Honolulu, O'ahu

Ray Maki
Kauai

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and Members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee,

The Hawaii Farmers Union United (HFUU) is a 501(c)(5) agricultural advocacy nonprofit representing a network of over 2,500 family farmers and their supporters across the Hawaiian Islands. **HFUU supports SB782.**

Taro, the traditional Hawaiian vegetable crop, is an integral part of Hawaiian cultural heritage and our agricultural industry. Currently, taro farmers are struggling due to environmental factors, such as drought and flooding, and economic stressors, such as low prices and competition from imported taro. SB782 Taro would provide some much-needed financial support for our hardworking taro farmers by appropriating funds to the department of agriculture to offer grants to Hawaii farming groups to be disbursed to taro farmers.

The funds created by this bill will help taro farmers increase their effectiveness and ensure their continued presence in Hawaii's agricultural industry and landscape. In addition, it can be used to support innovation and research to find ways to create further stability for our taro farmers.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Kaipo Kekona, President HFUU/HFUF



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e-mail info@hfbf.org; www.hfbf.org

March 2, 2023

HEARING BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

TESTIMONY ON SB 782, SD1
RELATING TO TARO

Conference Room 211 & Videoconference
10:00 AM

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice-Chair Keith-Agaran, 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 SB 782, SD1, which appropriates funds to the department of agriculture to provide grants to Hawaii farming groups to be disbursed to taro farmers.

The Hawai'i Farm Bureau recognizes taro's importance in Hawai'i's cultural identity and role in local food security. This measure is aimed to assist taro farmers in their efforts to increase their production and viability. We support this effort to improve the taro farmer's ability to not only sustain themselves but also to expand their long-term success.

HFB supports any initiative that reduces the cost of production so that locally produced goods can compete with imported products, strengthening our local economy.

Hawai'i Farm Bureau Policy states: "State tax and monetary policies should be designed to encourage private initiative to help stabilize farm economics in the State of Hawai'i, to promote employment and economic growth, and to distribute the tax burden equitably. Further such policy should be used by the state, when appropriate, to encourage agricultural growth and expansion."

HFB supports SB 782, SD1, which is an investment in Hawai'i's taro farmers.

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



Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action (HAPA) Supports: SB782 SD1

Thursday, March 2nd, 2023 10 a.m. Conference Room 211

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran and Members of the Committee,

We support SB782 SD1 which appropriates funds to the department of agriculture to provide grants to Hawai'i farming groups to be disbursed to taro farmers.

SB782 SD1 is a critical and necessary step towards supporting native traditional food ways, farming and food security for Hawai'i. We need to do everything we can to support expansion of farming and particularly the cultivation of taro (kalo) which is so culturally significant and is such an important part of our landscape, history, food security and community.

We believe this measure is a great way to support a native cultural practice and Hawai'i's staple food. Supporting taro farmers will also help to keep native Hawaiian traditional and customary cultural practices & its vital agricultural knowledge alive.

Kalo is a valued landscape and is recognized as the State Plant. Kalo farmers need and deserve support to ensure taro farming continues to grow and expand into the future. This measure helps to incentivize farmers to grow taro, one of the healthiest staple starch foods available.

SB782 SD1 will create economic incentives for taro farmers' and could reduce the cost of poi for local families. In doing so, this measure could help make taro more widely accessible and enable Hawaiian families to reconnect with this culturally important food source.

Please support SB782 SD1.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne Frederick', is written in a cursive style.

Anne Frederick
Executive Director



Food+ Policy Internship 2023

food@purplemaia.org

March 1, 2023

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

Subject: **SB782, Relating to Taro**

Food+ Policy strongly supports SB782, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Agriculture to provide grants to Hawai'i farming groups to be disbursed to taro farmers (SD1).

Taro farmers need support in order to thrive and be productive to serve their community. By helping taro farmers thrive, we not only help them to make a prosperous livelihood in which they are reconnecting with their livelihood that sustained them since ancient times, but we also help them provide more taro for the state to be consumed by Native Hawaiians so they can reconnect with a food that is culturally significant. We also help Hawai'i become more sustainable and ship in less taro. Currently the state ships in several hundred thousands pounds of taro annually when that taro could be grown by our Native Hawaiian taro farmers who are small farmers.

We humbly ask that you strongly support SB782 so that we can help our taro farmers with much needed grants so they can use the funds to make necessary purchases in order to meet the needs of taro in the state.

Taro is a very culturally significant food to Native Hawaiians. Currently, taro is not abundant in the state and therefore, most Hawaiians cannot afford to eat taro as regularly as they eat bread or crackers. And yet, it is taro that is the staple of the Native Hawaiians. If taro was more affordable because more of it is grown in Hawai'i, more families can reap the benefits of eating a healthy, sustainable, culturally significant food.

Kelsey Amos & the Food+ Policy Team
#fixourfoodsystem

The Food+ Policy internship develops student advocates who learn work skills while increasing civic engagement to become emerging leaders. We focus on good food systems policy because we see the importance and potential of the food system in combating climate change and increasing the health, equity, and resiliency of Hawai'i communities.

In 2023, the cohort of interns are undergraduate and graduate students from throughout the UH System. They are a mix of traditional and nontraditional students, including parents and veterans, who have backgrounds in education, farming, public health, nutrition, and Hawaiian culture.

SB-782-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/27/2023 9:07:56 PM

Testimony for WAM on 3/2/2023 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Will Caron	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Small farms on 10 acres or less in Hawai‘i produce a significant portion of locally-grown and locally-consumed food on each island. The small farm sector of agriculture is growing, yet the 2017 census of agriculture reported that the average small-scale farmer in Hawai‘i made less than \$40,000 per year, with losses of almost \$10,000 annually due to the high costs of farming, including land and water. To accomplish the State's 2030 goal for local food production, there is an urgent need to better support small farmers, including through small economic incentives to build a larger market.

Taro is one of Hawai‘i's highest yielding staple starch food crops, producing 10,000 and 20,000 pounds per acre per annum under wet and dry cultivation, respectively. However, taro is severely underproduced in the state. The 2017 census of agriculture reported a total of 207 farms and 495 acres of taro in wetland and dryland production. An estimated 200–300 additional acres are unreported or in subsistence taro cultivation.

Taro plays a critical role in the health of families, particularly Native Hawaiians, yet the cost of poi renders the staple inaccessible to families most in need of this important starch food. Taro imports are estimated to soon exceed local production.

Lo‘i kalo, or wetland taro systems, are also critical to mitigating other impacts of climate change by functioning as riparian buffers and sediment retention basins. Underground foods, such as taro, can often survive hurricanes or flood events and can be harvested to address immediate food shortages where the capacity to store and cook food can be retained.

The state should do everything it can to encourage the cultivation of kalo and the production of poi and other taro products. Please support this bill.