

**TESTIMONY**  
**HB 975, HD1**  
**LATE**



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## Testimony

Senate Committee on Water, Land, Agriculture and Hawaiian Affairs

### **Re: HB 975HD1 RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL WATER SYSTEMS**

Chair Oshiro and Members of the Committee:

Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation, on behalf of its' member farmers and ranchers is in **strong support of HB975 HD1** authorizing the ADC to acquire and manage agricultural water systems.

Since the closure of plantations irrigation infrastructure across the state has fallen into disrepair. The original intent of the Agribusiness Development Corporation was to perform functions such as those intended in this measure.

Assistance has been provided to farmers in the Waihole system and on Kauai. Most recently a need for assistance in Kau was demonstrated and renovation of that system has commenced.

HFBF strongly requests your support of this measure as without water there will be no agriculture. Thank you.

**Taro Security and Purity Task Force**  
Legislative Testimony

**LATE TESTING...**

**HB975 HD1 Relating to Agricultural Water Systems**  
House Committee on Water, Land, Agriculture and Hawaiian Affairs  
March 23, 2009      4:15 p.m.      Room 229

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Aloha Honorable Committee members,

The Taro Security and Purity Task Force opposes HB975 HD1 because of the bill's proposed amendments to Chapter 163D, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

Established by Act 211, Regular Session Laws 2008, the Taro Security and Purity Task Force is an 18-member group of taro farmers and state agency representatives. The task force was created to help protect kalo, which was recently named the official plant of the state.

The task force finds that the Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC) and the Department of Agriculture (DOA) have failed to enforce and manage the water systems in its current care in a fair and equitable manner that includes all farmers. Instead, ADC and DOA have managed these water systems consistently in favor of large agribusinesses, to the exclusion of small farmers and kuleana farmers.

The task force believes that the governance of the ADC is too top-heavy and does not provide for community decisions that support agriculture in all sectors.

The task force also has concerns with the provision of the bill that exempts the conveyance of an agricultural water system property to ADC from county subdivision requirements. The county subdivision requirements provide for a democratic means by which communities would have a say in what ADC does with the water systems it acquires. Exempting ADC from county subdivision requirements would effectively silence the voices of those farmers who are not being supported through the current top-down decision making of the ADC.

The Taro Security and Purity Task Force strongly recommends that the governance of ADC be revisited and that a more equitable balance of access and decision-making regarding water system management be established.

For the above-mentioned reasons, the Taro Security and Purity Task Force opposes HB975 HD1, and asks that the committee HOLD the measure. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Jim Cain, Chair  
Glenn Teves, Vice Chair  
Taro Security and Purity Task Force

[transmitted by email 23 March 2009]

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