

LINDA LINGLE
Governor



State of Hawaii
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
1428 South King Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96814-2512

SANDRA LEE KUNIMOTO
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

DUANE K. OKAMOTO
Deputy to the Chairperson

TESTIMONY OF SANDRA LEE KUNIMOTO
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2010
3:00 P.M.
ROOM 308

HOUSE BILL NO. 2832
RELATING TO TARO SECURITY

Chairperson Oshiro and Members of the Committee:

House Bill No. 2832 directs the department of agriculture to seek funding for projects that increase the cultivation and use of non-GMO Hawaiian taro. The department does not support the bill as written and offers comments.

This bill will create new responsibilities for the department at a time when shrinking resources require us to focus on our core mission. There are certainly other organizations in Hawaii that are in a much better position to make a compelling case for funding about the value of taro, particularly as taro relates to the seven areas of flood control, research, food security, community economic development, job creation, education, and water quality protection described in the bill.

The department recently participated in a statewide Taro Task Force headed by the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) and this bill seems to be a continuation of the Task Force's work.



HB 2832
RELATING TO TARO SECURITY
House Committee on Finance

February 19, 2010

3:00 p.m.

Room: 308

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS** HB2832, which would require the Department of Agriculture (DOA) to seek available federal, state, county or private funding for the purposes of restoring Hawaiian kalo and lo'i cultivation. The bill further requires that DOA cooperate, as necessary, with other relevant agencies, including OHA, in applying for funds and administering kalo-related projects.

Over the past year, OHA administered the Taro Security and Purity Task Force, which is cited in HB 2832, as the group traveled to taro-growing communities throughout the state collecting information for the findings and recommendations of its Final Report, which was submitted to the Legislature on December 29, 2009. The group has set a steady foundation for kalo security in Hawai'i. Our understanding is that this bill is a vehicle to help continue the important work, dialogue and networking that occurred under the task force.

We view DOA's role as lead administrator and coordinator under HB 2832 as an opportunity for the state to fulfill its solemn kuleana to kalo. Kalo is not only significant to Native Hawaiians, it is also critical to the cultural identity of the entire state. In recognition of this, the Legislature recently designated kalo as the official plant of the state.

OHA supports the task force and understand its value to the preservation and perpetuation of kalo, the staple of the traditional Hawaiian diet and the sacred elder brother of the Hawaiian people. We look forward to following DOA's lead in helping to ensure that kalo and kalo growers thrive once again in Hawai'i.

Therefore, OHA urges the Committee to PASS HB 2832. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.



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TESTIMONY

HB2832: RELATING TO TARO SECURITY

Chair Marcus Oshiro and Members of the Committee:

Hawaii Farm Bureau on behalf of our member farm and ranch families and organizations in commercial agriculture **opposes HB2832** establishing a mechanism for funding taro security.

The word challenging belittles the task before the Legislature this year. The budget crisis is huge and all of us as citizens of the State need to look hard within ourselves to define what should be the priorities to revitalize our economy and build Hawaii back into the State we all love.

HFBF during our 2009 House of Delegate session recognized the difficulties before us in 2010. We did an unprecedented move to change our policies to tax ourselves if needed to provide critical services to our farmers and ranchers. This was from a "no new taxes" policy. At the same time, normal General Fund requests were put into abeyance.

This measure seeks to utilize resources within the Hawaii Department of Agriculture. The department is currently short staffed and is having difficulty meeting the basic needs of Hawaii's agriculture and the community. We therefore, feel, this measure is inappropriate at this time. It is a "nice to have" measure vs. a "must have". It is only the latter that can be considered during these difficult times.

HFBF, therefore, respectfully requests that this measure be HELD.

Kauai County Farm Bureau

Affiliated with Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation

P.O. Box 3895 • Lihue HI 96766

808-337-9944 (phone/fax) 808-652-3217 (cell)

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The Voice of Kauai's Agriculture



February 18, 2010

ATTN: Committee on Finance
Rep. Marcus R. Oshiro (Chair), Rep. Marilyn B. Lee (Vice Chair) and Members
of the Committee

RE: HB2832 – Relating to Taro Security
Testimony of Kauai County Farm Bureau in OPPOSITION
Roy Oyama, President

HEARING DATE: Friday, February 19, 2010 – 3:00pm, Conference Room 308

Chair Oshiro, Vice Chair Lee and Members of the Committee:

Kauai County Farm Bureau on behalf of our member farm and ranch families, and affiliated with Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation, testifies **in opposition to HB2832** establishing a mechanism for funding taro security.

Kauai supplies 80.9% of the total taro production in the state of Hawaii based on the 2008 statistics from the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). Hanalei Valley taro farmers represent 60% of the Kauai production.

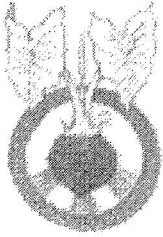
HB2832 would support only those farmers that grow taro listed in the Bulletin 84 – this does not include the predominant taro grown commercially on Kauai, and statewide – running counter to the interests of overall state food security.

The bill excludes farmers who grow taro which has been crossed with taro foreign to Hawaii (by hand pollination by Dr. John Cho and not GMO). These are popular hybrids now in commercial production, and have proven acceptable to the public in taste and are also resistant to phytophthora disease and dense enough to resist the apple snail. The commercial taro farmers in the State would also be denied use of the funds for all the other items listed in the bill and would not benefit.

This is a very challenging session where cuts to programs and agencies vital to agriculture are being discussed. This measure seeks to utilize resources within the Hawaii Department of Agriculture which is currently short staffed and having difficulty meeting the basic needs of Hawaii agriculture and the community. As farmers we recognize that we must focus only “critical needs” this year.

We believe that there are other commodity needs which are far more critical to act on now. At this time the #1 request for the Hanalei Valley taro farmers is the repair of their in-take. This in-take has been in need of repair for the past 15 years. This past November the major flood diverted 100% of their water and the entire Hanalei Valley taro fields were without water. The taro farmers only have a temporary repair and the next flood will again divert their water from their fields. Water is the lifeline and blood for the taro farmers and our local industry depends upon it.

We therefore join our local commodity group representing the majority of taro farmers – Kauai Taro Growers Association and our state delegation in respectfully requesting that HB2832 be HELD.



NHBA/NHLC Peacemaking Project
1164 Bishop Street #1205 Honolulu Hawai'i 96813
Telephone: (808) 521-2302
Email: lateale@nhlchi.org

February 17, 2010

Re: Testimony In Support of HB 2832, Relating to Taro Security

Aloha Kakou,

My name is Laulani Teale, and I am the Project Coordinator for the Native Hawaiian Bar Association/Native Hawaiian Legal Corporation Peacemaking Project. Our project works with families and communities throughout Hawai'i in providing supportive services (ho'oponopono, facilitation, agreement-building and review, legal support for cooperative agreements, negotiation support, networking support and other services) for cooperative prevention and resolution of conflict with and within the Hawaiian community.

Our project strongly supports HB 2832, as we believe that it provides important support to farmers and thereby the community's needs for health, culture and food security.

Our project works with a number of farmers who could benefit greatly from this measure. As a peacemaker, much of my work involves identifying sources of stress that have the potential to contribute to conflict, and for the taro farmers I work with, financial pressures (often so severe that their ability to keep their work alive) are a major source of that stress. I urge you to pass HB 2832 as a means to help to alleviate that stress.

Taro farmers are, by definition, extremely hard-working individuals with a great passion for what they do. If they weren't, their crops would fail. As such, they are as a group a tremendous resource to the community and an inspiration to the many children and youth who are regularly brought to visit the traditional lo'i kalo – additional work for which farmers are generally not paid, but which they contribute regularly as a major community resource. They have fully earned every dollar that would be contributed by this measure.

Furthermore, the funding identified by HB 2832 is targeted toward areas in which help is needed, particularly in areas such as flood control and water quality protection. Our project believes strongly that funding should only be used for non-GMO, traditional Hawaiian taro. This is very important to all the farmers we have spoken with, and is a critical issue in discussions about culture and food sovereignty.

Mahalo nui for your attention to this important matter.

Me ka 'oia'i'o,

Laulani Teale

Laulani Teale, MPH
NHBA/NHLC Peacemaking Project Coordinator

Hawaii Farmers Union
P.O. Box 1863
Honokaa, Hawaii 96727

Testimony on SB 2832 HD1, Relating to Taro Security

House Finance Committee
Friday, February 19, 2010
3:00 p.m.
Conference Room 308

In support of SB 2832 HDI

**Aloha Rep. Marcus. R. Oshiro, Chair, Rep. Marilyn B. Lee, Vice Chair and
Committee members,**

Hawaii Farmers Union commends lawmakers for recognizing and affirming the tremendous role kalo can play in our future as it has from the earliest history of Hawai'i, while acknowledging the value of na mahiai kalo of all ages - growing and perpetuating taro cultivation today.

HFU appreciates the work of the Taro Task Force and notes that much of its findings are resonant with National Farmers Union policy, including that portion which discusses the many ethical, environmental and economic issues that agricultural genetic engineering has presented family farmers with. Moreover, our policy is congruent with the intent of this bill to promote sustainable farming as an answer for today's many pressing economic and environmental challenges.

Hawaii Farmers Union is the newest branch of the National Farmers Union – America's oldest and most distinguished farming organization, representing nearly 300,000 members nationwide and advocating for family farmers, ranchers, fishers and rural communities since 1902.

National Farmers Union's focus on the viability and prosperity of family farmers extends to a concern for healthy communities, stewardship of natural resources and a just distribution of economic resources – beyond borders and for urban as well as rural people everywhere.

Established as a subdivision of the California Farmers Union in 2008, Hawaii Farmers Union now has active chapters on Kauai, Oahu, Maui, and Hawaii Island.

Thank you for your visionary leadership in support of this measure.

Sincerely,

Eden Marie Peart, President, Hawaii Farmers Union

hawaiifarmersunion@gmail.com

www.hawaiifarmersunion.org

www.nfu.org

February 18, 2010

Testimony of Rodney Haraguchi
President, Kauai Taro Growers Association

House Finance Committee
Rep. Marcus Oshiro, Chair
Rep. Marilyn Lee, Vice Chair
Friday, February 19, 2010, 3:00 PM, House Conference Room 308

Opposition of HB2832 relating to Taro Security

Dear Members of the House Finance Committee:

The members of the Kauai Taro Growers Association (KTGA) represent 80-90% of the taro acreage here on Kauai which totals approximately 250 acres. And Kauai supplies 80.9% of the total taro production in the state of Hawaii based on the 2008 statistics from the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). Hanalei Valley taro farmers represent 60% of the Kauai production.

In this economy we appreciate that the committee is taking time to hear a bill on taro security for the taro industry. However, this bill is only to support farmers that grow taro listed in the Bulletin 84 which does not include the predominate taro grown commercially and therefore will exclude all the commercial farmers. **It must be very clear also, that there is NO GMO TARO available to plant and there is NO TARO FARMER IN THE STATE growing GMO taro and this misinformation is constantly misrepresenting the truth.**

This bill will also exclude farmers that grow taro that has been crossed with taro foreign to Hawaii (by hand pollination by Dr. John Cho and not GMO) but has been proven acceptable to the public in taste and is also resistant to phytophthora disease and dense enough to resist the apple snail.

KTGA has been doing non GMO taro research with the UH College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR) for the past 18 years and is currently doing research on organic and fertilizer comparisons. Although there have been implications that some taro farmers have had a "rift" with CTAHR (according to the letter sent to UH President from the Taro Security & Purity Task Force, which KTGA opposed this letter), the members have always worked well with the CTAHR researchers and professors.

The commercial taro farmers in the State will also be denied use of the funds for all the other items listed in the bill. At this time the #1 request for the Hanalei Valley taro farmers is the repair of their in-take. This in-take has been in need of repair for the past 15 years due to a small break that they were prevented from totally repairing due to an adjacent neighbor. This past November the major flood diverted 100% of their water and the entire Hanalei Valley taro fields were without water. The taro farmers only have a temporary repair and the next flood will again divert their water from their fields.

With the tight budget and economy, we need to prioritize the needs and water is the lifeline and blood for the taro farmers. We ask for your assistance for this repair to keep the taro growing in the Hanalei Valley.

February 18, 2010

Testimony of Les Nakama
President, Aloha Poi Company

House Finance Committee
Rep. Marcus Oshiro, Chair
Rep. Marilyn Lee, Vice Chair
Friday, February 19, 2010, 3:00 PM, House Conference Room 308

Opposition of HB2832 relating to Taro Security

Chair Marcus Oshiro and Members of the Committee:

My name is Les Nakama and I am a commercial poi producer on Maui. I work with 15 taro growers on Maui. Along with the Haraguchi's on Kauai we provide the majority of poi consumed in the islands.

The majority of taro grown by the farmers on Maui is Maui Lehua. I understand, this variety would not be included in the Taro Security Measure. While I was not a participant, I have heard about the discussions that have occurred with the Taro Task Force. I am very concerned that the priorities of the commercial taro farmers that provide the majority of taro consumed in Hawaii is getting lost.

On Maui, I have seen the new hybrids created by Dr. John Cho using conventional breeding techniques. These varieties would not be in the referenced book. If we are trying to have taro security, why does it need to be limited to those in the book? New varieties are what is helping the rest of agriculture increase production and reduce cost. These same opportunities should be available to us as commercial taro growers. We should not be limited to the varieties in the referenced book.

Preservation of taro for cultural purposes has its' place and I am not opposed to it. But, it is different from commercial production and I respectfully ask that the Committee recognize this. Our future lies in change.

I ask that this bill be HELD at this time. The HDOA has undergone severe budget cuts and have critical priorities that must be addressed. I do not see this as a priority for their time. Thank you.

Aloha Chair Oshiro and committee member,

I am writing in full support of hb2832, and on behalf of taro growers and the taro community around the state, wish to extend a warm mahalo for your support as we seek to increase the production of taro. As you know, the Taro Security and Purity Task Force, with the support and funding of OHA, spent the last year visiting taro growing communities around the state, seeking input on how we can work together to both support long time growers, and encourage and provide opportunities to a new generation of taro growers. Together, with input from many stakeholders, we have forged and strengthened many relationships and put together a comprehensive overview of the steps necessary to move forward in our quest to increase the supply of taro for Hawai'i. Waipi'o kupuna Uncle Ted Kaaekuahiwi said it best, "To grow taro you need land, water and people." It is important to understand that all of the facets involved in the process of growing taro are inter-dependent of each other, and each component must be healthy in order for the farmer to be successful.

SB2915 the original legislation put forth by the taro farmers, and passed unanimously by the 2008 legislature, contained funding in the amount of \$325,000 to be matched by OHA. Due to a line-item veto by the Governor, the Task Force proceeded with limited funding provided by OHA and accomplished the first step in supporting the taro community. We observed traditional protocol, we took the time to kahea, to introduce ourselves and state our intentions, and we listened. In doing so, we have gained trust and there is an atmosphere of hope. The task force report is a complete and holistic view that comes from the taro community, and outlines the steps necessary to make sure it thrives. There is a lifetime of work contained in the pages of the report, and it is vital that we now translate the many solid recommendations on policy and programs into action. There are many who are dedicated to seeing this through, and we look forward to working with OHA and all other stakeholders on implementing the plan.

It is important that the State of Hawai'i show commitment to this process as well. In this time of economic distress, resources are limited. Balancing the state budget is foremost on your minds. But we must also recognize the importance of creating jobs for both the short and long term, and in this unprecedented economic crisis lay the opportunity to diversify our economy. Local food production is a huge untapped area of potential economic growth. I urge you to let those of us who are motivated help shoulder this heavy load. Match our commitment to this process. We must be creative as we search for the resources that are necessary to move forward, and we will continue to explore the many options that are available, as well as exploring the partnerships that can lead to success. I am confident, that if we work together, we will ensure that taro will remain a solid foundation for Hawai'i's agriculture.

There were several bills that we put forth this session whose aim is to help in our efforts to implement the task force report, we have been advised that in the

interest of time, only one bill would be heard. In order to strengthen this bill, and to ensure that our intent of effectively supporting the taro community and taro farmers is realized, I would like to offer the following amendments to hb2832:

1. Extend the life of the task force for two additional years.

The Taro Security and Purity Task Force is set to sunset on June 30, 2010. While we have accomplished much in setting a road map to increased taro production, much remains to be done in respect to implementing the many programs that will help in this effort. Extending the life of the task force will ensure that this very powerful working group will remain together and focus our efforts to continue the process.

2. Direct DOA and DLNR to identify suitable taro growing lands held by the state and establish a program to make such lands available to taro growers.

There is no shortage of lands suitable for growing taro, however access to these lands is limited. Getting people on land and making the lands productive will have a great economic benefit to the state.

3. Provide funding in the amount \$300,000 to be matched by similar funding by OHA.

The funding will be used to establish a program within OHA to ensure that the many recommendations contained in the task force report will be carried out. The proposed funding will enable program development and implementation, as well as support the effort to search and apply for funding that will continue this process to support the taro growers. A programmatic approach to moving forward, in combination with continued involvement and leadership from the taro community will be the most effective route to ensure that the efforts put forth over the past year and a half will bear fruit. Currently the state of Hawai'i spends about 1% of its budget on agriculture. Combining this small amount of funding with the motivated efforts of the taro community, while seeking additional funding sources, results in increased benefits for the cost.

In closing, I would again like to extend a warm mahalo for your unwavering support.

Me ke aloha,

Jim Cain, Chair, Taro Security and

Purity Task Force

TO: Representative Marcus Oshiro, Chair
House Finance Committee

FROM: Penny Levin

DATE: Friday, February 19, 2010
(Submitted by email)

Aloha honorable Chair and Committee members;

I am testifying as an individual and a taro farmer from Maui in support of HB2832 with amendments (attached).

As a member of the Taro Security and Purity Task Force, it has been an honor to listen to the voice of so many taro farmers throughout the state and provide to this year's legislature our report *E ola hou ke kalo; ho'i hou ka 'aina le'ia: the taro lives; abundance returns to the land*, which outlines the work of the task force and its subsequent recommendations.

In 2008, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs provided funding which allowed us to meet the only one task outlined in Act 211 – to provide recommendations that address taro farmer concerns and improve taro farmer conditions in the state. Unfortunately, most of the project or program based initiatives either outlined in Act 211 or within the 2010 Report remain unimplemented for lack of funding originally earmarked by the state.

We understand that in this time of fiscal crisis that it is important to place funding where it will create the greatest leverage of outside resources, a large number of jobs and a broad array of direct and indirect benefits and returns, including revenues, value-added businesses, and food for local tables.

Why support this bill to continue the efforts of the task force?

1. Jobs

In Maui County, one estimate places agriculture jobs at 12.5 people per 100 acres. The average taro farm is less than 5 acres but provides direct jobs for an average 2-5 people, or 40-100 jobs per 100 acres, not including poi processors, chip makers, kulolo makers, etc.

2. Economics and revenues

In 2009, a recorded 4.3 million pound of raw taro provided more than a million dollars in tax revenues to the state – from 390 acres. This did not include lu'au leaf or other taro products. The more taro farmers on the land, the greater the revenues to the state.

A survey conducted in 2005 indicated taro growers realized a 50-65% savings to family food budgets, freeing up money to meet other needs.

Taro is symbolic of the heart of aloha. It is an ambassador for the state to the rest of the world. Its image graces hotels, tourism brochures, advertising campaigns, magazines and

movies that sell Hawaii. In this capacity, the revenues it generates for the state are one-hundred fold.

3. Food self-sufficiency and security

At ratio of 1 to 0.75 exchange between raw taro and poi, taro growers provided over 3.2 million pounds of poi to consumers in Hawai'i in 2009. At a ratio of four servings per pound, this put 12.9 million meals on local tables.

The State of Hawai'i imports 85 to 90 percent of its food. All of the taro plant is edible; the entire crop represents a proportionally high contribution to local food self-sufficiency.

4. Environment

Traditional taro systems provide a cost-effective means of protecting soil and water resources and mitigating flood zones. Water passing through the taro patch supports native biota and reduces sedimentation to our nearshore reefs. Taro farming communities protect local watersheds.

5. Culture and wellbeing

To celebrate and support the rich heritage of Hawaiian culture and knowledge through the preservation and perpetuation of taro and taro farming is an important part of how we survive as a whole.

Out of the taro farm comes a livelihood, an education, a classroom, a committed stewardship towards the land and water, a resilient community able to feed itself, and able to care for each other.

Out of the taro comes life!

There could be no better return on such a small investment than to support the continuation of the task force and the implementation of its recommendations.

Please support HB2832 with the attached amendments.

Mahalo nui loa.

Penny Levin
Taro farmer, Wailuku
Member, Taro Security and Purity Task Force

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO TARO SECURITY.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. Kalo, the Hawaiian word for taro (*Colocasia*
2 *esculenta*), is a culturally significant plant to the kanaka
3 maoli (Hawaii's indigenous peoples) and the State of Hawaii.
4 Kalo intrinsically embodies the interdependency of the past, the
5 present, and the future, the essence of procreation and
6 regeneration, as the foundation of any sustainable practice.
7 Kalo expresses the spiritual and physical well-being of not only
8 the kanaka maoli and their heritage, but also symbolizes the
9 environmental, social, and cultural values important to the
10 State. This relationship is represented in the use of the kalo
11 plant on the crown of King Kalakaua. The state seal, adopted in
12 1959, includes eight taro leaves below the shield, honoring the
13 connection between the health of the land and the health of the
14 State. Today, the logo of the office of Hawaiian affairs and
15 many commercial enterprises throughout the State use this symbol
16 to communicate ohana, integrity, and a connection to Hawaiian
17 culture. The State of Hawaii further recognized the cultural

1 and historic significance of taro by designating it as the
2 official state plant.

3 Over three hundred kalo varieties may have existed at the
4 time of the arrival of European explorers (Pukui and Elbert,
5 *Hawaiian Dictionary*, 1986). ~~Of these, sixty-nine varieties are~~
6 ~~unique to the Hawaiian islands due to the horticultural skills~~
7 ~~of native Hawaiian farmers (according to *Bulletin 84: Taro*~~
8 ~~*Varieties in Hawaii*, 1939).~~ Less than one third remain. Some
9 varieties are extremely rare. It is important to this rich
10 heritage and today's taro farmers to recover, protect and
11 perpetuate as many of these varieties as we can. Encouraging
12 the cultivation and innovative uses of these varieties is
13 critically important to the recovery of old taro varieties in
14 Hawaii.

15 Kalo is an important food crop in Hawaii and, most locally-
16 grown taro is consumed within the State, indicating a highly
17 specialized market. Historically, there were thousands of acres
18 under taro cultivation in Hawaii. Today, however, there remain
19 less than five hundred acres of taro in production. In 2007,
20 four million pounds were produced on three hundred eighty acres
21 of commercial taro land (10,526 pounds per acre) at a farm gate
22 value of \$2,360,000, amounting to an estimated per acre value of

1 \$6,210, excluding luau leaf. Raw taro and value-added taro
2 products represent a multi-million dollar crop in Hawaii with
3 great potential for further growth as the State moves towards
4 food security and self-sufficiency.

5 In addition to its value as a crop, taro cultivation also
6 has economic and environmental benefits. For example, the
7 cultivation of taro can assist with flood control and erosion
8 prevention. Taro cultivation also ~~flushes wastes~~ captures
9 sediment from ~~ground~~surfacewater, helping to improve near-shore
10 and wetland water quality. As an indigenous crop to Hawaii,
11 taro is a ready source of locally grown food that may help
12 provide food security for the State by easing Hawaii's
13 dependence on imported food products. Taro cultivation also
14 presents opportunities for job creation and community economic
15 development. Finally, taro's unique place in Hawaii's history
16 and culture makes it an educational tool for Hawaii's youth,
17 providing a way for them to learn about Hawaiian culture as well
18 as to develop valuable agricultural and job skills.

19 Taro cultivation in Hawaii, however, faces many challenges.
20 Pests, invasive species, and diseases place taro crops at risk.
21 Water quality concerns and shrinking arable land available for
22 taro farms also threaten taro production. Alternatives to

1 Hawaiian taro, such as genetically-engineered taro and foreign
2 varieties of taro, also create obstacles to taro production. In
3 2008, the legislature established the two-year taro security and
4 purity task force under Act 211, Session Laws of Hawaii 2008, to
5 address non-genetically modified organism alternatives to taro
6 farmer issues, including land and water concerns, threats from
7 pests, diseases and taro imports, educational opportunities, and
8 economic issues. The 2010 Legislative Report entitled, *E ola*
9 *hou ke kalo; ho'i hou ka 'aina le'ia: the taro lives; abundance*
10 *returns to the land*, outlines the work of the task force and its
11 subsequent recommendations.

12 Currently, the state imports an estimated 1.8 million
13 pounds of taro annually (2008 statistics). The taro security
14 and purity task force found "no logical reason why we should
15 continue to import any kind of taro to meet local needs" (pg42).
16 Key to expanding the capacity for taro self-sufficiency in
17 Hawaii is access to and affordability of taro lands.

18 The task force also found the state of Hawaii retains
19 numerous lands in its jurisdiction that were former taro lands
20 or are lands capable of becoming both wet and dryland taro
21 producing areas on all islands. It determined that lease rates
22 were inconsistent, in some cases unduly expensive, influenced by

the value of adjacent developed lands and therefore unaffordable or accessible to existing or new taro farmers. Taro farming lands appear in general to have higher lease rates among state agencies than for other agriculture uses. The high cost of leases makes critical fallow practices which improve soil health, reduce apple snail populations and fungal diseases in taro soils, unaffordable.

The purpose of this Act is to 1) extend the life of the task force for five years (2015) to support implementation of recommendations in the 2010 report; 2) to task the department of land and natural resources and the department of agriculture, in conjunction with the taro security and purity task force, to;

(a) re-evaluate agency lands inventories for potential taro-growing lands, and using local knowledge of the location of historic dry and wetland taro cultivated areas, and the needs of taro, designate said lands with taro production as their highest priority use by 2012;

(b) develop a consistent and affordable lease rent rate schedule specific to taro farmed lands by 2012;

(c) set a cap on lease rents at no more than \$100 per acre, irregardless of adjacent land use values; and

- 1 (d) review existing qualifying criteria for farm leases and
2 develop a consistent, accessible criteria for taro
3 farmers to qualify for taro land leases by 2012; and
4 (e) develop a mechanism by which the taro lands list,
5 opportunities for lease of these lands, qualifying
6 criteria, and agency supports are consistently,
7 accurately and easily available to taro farmers
8 organizations and individual interested in growing taro
9 by 2012.

10 and 3) encourage the cultivation and innovative use of Hawaiian
11 varieties of taro for projects that address:

- 12 (1) Flood control;
13 (2) Research;
14 (3) Food security;
15 (4) Community economic development;
16 (5) Job creation;
17 (6) Education;
18 (7) Wetland restoration and preservation; and
19 (8) Water quality protection.

20 SECTION 2. Chapter 10, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended
21 by adding a new section to be appropriately designated and to
22 read as follows:

1 "§10- Taro security; funding. (a) the state of Hawaii
2 shall provide \$300,000 to be matched with funding from the
3 office of Hawaiian affairs;

4 (b) The office of Hawaiian affairs and the department of
5 agriculture may shall seek available federal, state, county, or
6 private funding that may be available for the purposes of
7 restoring Hawaiian taro and lo'i cultivation. The office of
8 Hawaiian affairs shall cooperate with other relevant agencies in
9 applying for funds pursuant to this section.

10 (c) The office of Hawaiian affairs shall be authorized to
11 use funds received pursuant to subsection (1) as recommended in
12 the task force report and for projects that utilize exclusively
13 Hawaiian taro for:

14 (1) Flood control;

15 (2) Research;

16 (3) Food security;

17 (4) Community economic development;

18 (5) Job creation;

19 (6) Education;

20 (7) Wetland restoration and preservation; and

21 (8) Water quality protection.

22 (c) As used in this section:

1 "Hawaiian taro" means taro species that are unique to
2 Hawaii, as listed in Bulletin 84: Taro Varieties in Hawaii,
3 1939, in Taro Planters in Old Hawaii (Handy 1940), and other
4 printed or archived materials that describe the taro varieties
5 of old.

6 SECTION 3. New statutory material is underscored.

7 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2010;
8 provided that this Act shall be repealed on June 30, 2015.

Report Title:

Taro Security

Description:

Authorizes the office of Hawaiian affairs to seek and use federal, state, or private funding for projects that increase the cultivation and use of Hawaiian taro. Repealed on 06/30/2015.

The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.

February 18, 2010

Testimony of Les Nakama
President, Aloha Poi Company

House Finance Committee
Rep. Marcus Oshiro, Chair
Rep. Marilyn Lee, Vice Chair
Friday, February 19, 2010, 3:00 PM, House Conference Room 308

Opposition of HB2832 relating to Taro Security

Chair Marcus Oshiro and Members of the Committee:

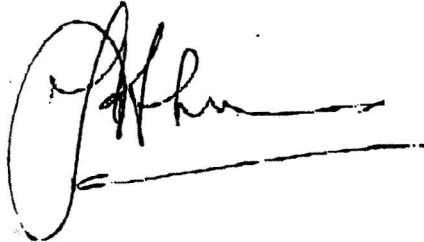
My name is Les Nakama and I am a commercial poi producer on Maui. I work with 15 taro growers on Maui. Along with the Haraguchi's on Kauai we provide the majority of poi consumed on the island.

The majority of taro grown by the farmers on Maui is Maui Lehua. I understand, this variety would not be included in the Taro Security Measure. While I was not a participant, I have heard about the discussions that have occurred with the Taro Task Force. I am very concerned that the priorities of the commercial taro farmers that provide the majority of taro consumed in Hawaii is getting lost.

On Maui, I have seen the new hybrids created by Dr. John Cho using conventional breeding techniques. These varieties would not be in the referenced book. If we are trying to have taro security, why does it need to be limited to those in the book? New varieties are what is helping the rest of agriculture increase production and reduce cost. These same opportunities should be available to us as commercial taro growers. We should not be limited to the varieties in the referenced book.

Preservation of taro for cultural purposes has its' place and I am not opposed to it. But, it is different from commercial production and I respectfully ask that the Committee recognize this. Our future lies in change.

I ask that this bill be HELD at this time. The HDOA has undergone severe budget cuts and have critical priorities that must be addressed. I do not see this as a priority for their time. Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Les Nakama', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

FINTestimony

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Thursday, February 18, 2010 2:56 PM
To: FINTestimony
Cc: yamakawa@hawaii.edu
Subject: Testimony for HB2832 on 2/19/2010 3:00:00 PM

Testimony for FIN 2/19/2010 3:00:00 PM HB2832

Conference room: 308
Testifier position: oppose
Testifier will be present: No
Submitted by: Roy Yamakawa
Organization: University of Hawaii, CTAHR
Address: 3060 Eiwa St., #210 Lihue, HI 96766
Phone: (808) 274-3471, (808) 635-5989
E-mail: yamakawa@hawaii.edu
Submitted on: 2/18/2010

Comments:

I respectfully do not support HB 2832.

The purpose of this Act is in opposition to the interest and security of the commercial taro industry in Hawaii, and not supported by the Kauai Taro Growers Association and the taro growers in Kauai, who according to the latest Hawaii Department of Agriculture statistics (2008), produce 80.9% of the state's taro. Since this bill does not benefit, and is in fact an obstacle to the welfare of the taro industry, who does it benefit?

This bill is contrary to, and does not support taro security in Hawaii.

FINTestimony

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
ent: Thursday, February 18, 2010 11:28 AM
To: FINTestimony
Cc: ponosize@hotmail.com
Subject: Testimony for HB2832 on 2/19/2010 3:00:00 PM

Testimony for FIN 2/19/2010 3:00:00 PM HB2832

Conference room: 308
Testifier position: support
Testifier will be present: No
Submitted by: Pono Kealoha
Organization: Individual
Address: 1107 Acacia Rd. #113 Pearlcity. Nation of Hawaii
Phone: 808-456-5772
E-mail: ponosize@hotmail.com
Submitted on: 2/18/2010

Comments:

Hawaiian Agriculture science is just as valid as U.S. western science. Be cognizant of GMO or GE drawbacks and dangers which is documented throughout the world as is in the U.S. GMO should be banned in Hawai'i and especially the tampering of our "haloa" crop producing which is unique to our sustenance, culture, and heritage. Above all it needs to be protected from outside elitist interests. We need to secure this important crop in Hawai'i for prosperity and inheritance of our future generations. It should be protected from foreign invasive fauna and flora which enter our islands. GMO is out of the question in allowing its existence in Hawai'i. I support a bill to protect our taro/kalo from GMO and invasive species that attempt to alter or assault our indispensable crop of Hawai'i.

Pono

FINTestimony

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Thursday, February 18, 2010 8:13 AM
To: FINTestimony
Cc: tane_1@msn.com
Subject: Testimony for HB2832 on 2/19/2010 3:00:00 PM

Testimony for FIN 2/19/2010 3:00:00 PM HB2832

Conference room: 308
Testifier position: support
Testifier will be present: No
Submitted by: David M.K. Inciong, II
Organization: Individual
Address: 1107 Acacia Road #113 Pearl City, HI
Phone: 456-5772
E-mail: tane_1@msn.com
Submitted on: 2/18/2010

Comments:

Hawaiian Agriculture science is just as valid as U.S. western science. Be cognizant of GMO or GE drawbacks and dangers which is documented throughout the world as is in the U.S. GMO should be banned in Hawai'i and especially the tampering of our "haloa" crop producing which is unique to our sustenance, culture, and heritage. Above all it needs to be protected from outside elitist interests. We need to secure this important crop in Hawai'i for prosperity and inheritance of our future generations. It should be protected from foreign invasive fauna and flora which enter our islands. GMO is out of the question in allowing its existence in Hawai'i. I support a bill to protect our taro/kalo from GMO and invasive species that attempt to alter or assault our indispensable crop of Hawai'i.