

DAVID Y. IGE
Governor

SHAN S. TSUTSUI
Lt. Governor



SCOTT E. ENRIGHT
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

PHYLLIS SHIMABUKURO-GEISER
Deputy to the Chairperson

State of Hawaii
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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TESTIMONY OF SCOTT E. ENRIGHT
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

Thursday, February 4, 2016
8:30 A.M.
CONFERENCE ROOM 312

HOUSE BILL NO. 2676
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Chairperson Tsuji and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill No. 2676 which establishes within the University of Hawaii College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources Agribusiness Incubator Program, a five-year energy independent farming community pilot project. There are two appropriations totaling \$150,000. The project includes land acquisition, infrastructure and housing development, land management and maintenance, and employment of technologies to cause energy and water independence. The Department of Agriculture supports the intent of this measure but defers to the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our testimony.





UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Written Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Agriculture
Thursday, February 4, 2016 at 8:30 am

By

Robert Bley-Vroman, Chancellor

And

Maria Gallo, Dean

And

J. Kenneth Grace, Associate Dean

College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

HB 2676 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Chair Tsuji, Vice Chair Onishi, and members of the House Committee on Agriculture, thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of HB 2676, which appropriates funds to the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources, Agricultural Incubator Program for the establishment of a five-year energy independent farming community pilot project.

Beginning farmers in Hawai'i face substantial difficulties in obtaining affordable land to farm that is accessible and has adequate infrastructure. Additionally, most new farmers must live in one location, and commute to their agricultural land. The lease or mortgage costs associated with maintaining two pieces of property (residence and farm), the costs of commuting, and high risk of agricultural vandalism and theft at unattended farm lots, make this a very difficult, if not impossible, situation for the future generation of farmers. The resulting decline in those entering farming and succeeding at it threatens the food security of Hawai'i.

HB 2676 proposes to investigate and implement a novel solution to this dilemma by establishing sustainable, energy-independent farming communities on state land. These communities would share central facilities, with homes located adjacent to each tenant's farm. Modern technologies make such essentially off-the-grid communities with alternative energy sources, water reuse, and small, low-cost housing units a viable proposition.

The Agricultural Incubator Program (AIP) has contributed to the business success of many small farmers and food producers in Hawai'i. Planning of such a farming community pilot project, including identification of economic and regulatory obstacles and possible solutions, is within the program's area of expertise. First year costs for planning and business plan development would be \$150,000 for AIP personnel and operational support. Other state agencies are expected to become involved as partners in subsequent years to address the business infrastructure and land stewardship needs of the pilot project.

The decline in new farmers is a serious issue for Hawai'i that demands novel approaches. We greatly appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of HB 2676.

LATE

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Thursday, February 04, 2016 7:25 AM
To: AGRtestimony
Cc: brian@hfbf.org
Subject: *Submitted testimony for HB2676 on Feb 4, 2016 08:30AM*

HB2676

Submitted on: 2/4/2016

Testimony for AGR on Feb 4, 2016 08:30AM in Conference Room 312

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Randy Cabral	Hawaii Farm Bureau	Support	Yes

Comments:

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To: AGRtestimony
Cc: bcole47@hawaiiantel.net
Subject: *Submitted testimony for HB2676 on Feb 4, 2016 08:30AM*

HB2676

Submitted on: 2/2/2016

Testimony for AGR on Feb 4, 2016 08:30AM in Conference Room 312

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Betsy Cole	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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To: AGRtestimony
Cc: starmer@hawaii.edu
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HB2676

Submitted on: 2/2/2016

Testimony for AGR on Feb 4, 2016 08:30AM in Conference Room 312

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Kaelan	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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**Written Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Agriculture
Thursday, February 4, 2016; 8:30 am
By
Steven Chiang**

HB 2676 RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Chair Tsuji, Vice-Chair Onishi, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to testify in support of HB2676, which funds the Agribusiness Incubator Program to establish an energy-independent farming community pilot project.

As the Director of the Agribusiness Incubator Program, which provides business consulting to new and existing agribusinesses, and as the co-founder of the GoFarm Hawaii beginning farmer training program, I am well aware of the challenges Hawaii's farmers face.

As you may know, the average age of Hawaii's farmers continues to increase. What is most troubling to me is that, despite the evident increase in the interest in and support of farming, the number of beginning farmers nationwide has declined by 20% in the five years between the most recent USDA censuses. In my experience, a significant portion of this disparity is due to the difficulty in acquiring land to farm.

For the aspiring farmers that my two programs encounter across the state, the number one obstacle they face in actualizing their aspirations is the lack of accessible farmland. When I use the word "accessibility" I am not simply speaking of availability, as Hawaii has ample unused farmland. I am speaking of critical factors that impact beginning and small farmers' ability to feasibly farm a piece of land. Factors such as affordability, eligibility, and suitability.

Passage of this bill would allow the State and other landowners to see that a cluster of extremely modest homes connected to small acreage lots and unconnected to utilities can address obstacles facing both landowners and farmers. Obstacles that, if overcome, will result in making more farmland accessible to small farmers.

Specifically, for landowners, this innovative model of energy independent clustered farm housing will obviate many infrastructure costs, simplify termination of leases, promote leasing of larger parcel sizes, enhance the agricultural appeal of lands disconnected from utilities, and generate more revenue per acre.

For farmers, this model will make farming more affordable, reduce ag theft, increase farm productivity, and increase the likelihood of being able to acquire farmland at all.

My preliminary analysis on the return on investment for this model is promising, and that is without factoring in any effects to the economy from the additional farm businesses or lease rents and without factoring in the benefits to the State that come from increased food security and productive agricultural land use.

There is an urgent need to address the issue of farmland accessibility, and this bill will help to develop a very promising and innovative solution that will serve as a model for governmental and private landowners in Hawaii and beyond. I strongly urge the committee to support its passage. Thank you.

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Wednesday, February 03, 2016 12:38 PM
To: AGRtestimony
Cc: akamaimom@gmail.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB2676 on Feb 4, 2016 08:30AM

HB2676

Submitted on: 2/3/2016

Testimony for AGR on Feb 4, 2016 08:30AM in Conference Room 312

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Felicia Cowden	Individual	Support	No

Comments: Please enthusiastically SUPPORT HB2676 that establishes, within CTAHR's agribusiness incubator program, a five-year energy independent farming community pilot project. The broader approval of this allowance of farming community is what is essential for successful diversified agriculture for particularly locally-based food supply. The costs of land and farming practices separating the farmer and the crop makes robust food production untenable. Hopefully, there will be an incubator pilot program on every island as to build confidence for our county governments to welcome this housing application that addresses both food production and offering affordable farm housing. Each island has a similar need but perhaps a variance of what would work best within their economies and communities. Felicia Cowden Kilauea, Kauai

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To: AGRtestimony
Cc: hoonanea@aol.com
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HB2676

Submitted on: 2/3/2016

Testimony for AGR on Feb 4, 2016 08:30AM in Conference Room 312

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Regina Gregory	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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To: AGRtestimony
Cc: pauldionbrooks@gmail.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB2676 on Feb 4, 2016 08:30AM

HB2676

Submitted on: 2/3/2016

Testimony for AGR on Feb 4, 2016 08:30AM in Conference Room 312

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Paul Brooks	Individual	Comments Only	No

Comments: Housing and food prices are going up, Wages are generally not, and jobs can be hard to find. Allowing people to live and work together to diminish the cost of living could help a lot of people.

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Cc: kauaihale@gmail.com
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HB2676

Submitted on: 2/3/2016

Testimony for AGR on Feb 4, 2016 08:30AM in Conference Room 312

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Louisa Wooton	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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Cc: paul.massey@ribg.org
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HB2676

Submitted on: 2/3/2016

Testimony for AGR on Feb 4, 2016 08:30AM in Conference Room 312

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Paul Massey	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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HB2676

Submitted on: 2/3/2016

Testimony for AGR on Feb 4, 2016 08:30AM in Conference Room 312

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Paul Marshall	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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