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Statement of
LEO R. ASUNCION
Acting Director, Office of Planning
before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
Tuesday, March 3, 2015
11:00 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 308

in consideration of
HB 443
**MAKING AN APPROPRIATION TO UPDATE AGRICULTURAL SOIL
CLASSIFICATIONS AND MAPS.**

Chair Luke, Vice Chair Nishimoto, and Members of the House Committee on Finance.

The Office of Planning (OP) supports the intent of HB 443, and respectfully requests your consideration of amendments to the bill. HB 443 would appropriate as much as \$2 million each fiscal year for Fiscal Years 2016 and 2017 for OP and the Land Use Commission (LUC) to update agricultural soil classifications and maps.

OP acknowledges long-standing concerns over the use of the Land Study Bureau (LSB) overall (master) productivity ratings in regulating land uses in the State Agricultural District. However, OP and the LUC lack the technical expertise or functional mandate with which to guide and implement this undertaking. OP is also concerned about the fiscal implications of HB 443, and its impact on the fiscal priorities in the Executive Budget.

OP recommends a more cost-effective approach to determine how agricultural classifications should be used and updated for the purpose of regulating uses on agricultural lands. This would entail examining how the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) soil classification system and its National Farmland Inventory program might be used to map and update agricultural land capability in Hawaii. The USDA maintains its soils classification system in a publicly-accessible GIS format that greatly reduces the cost to the State of collecting and maintaining geospatial data on soils, soil conditions, and productive capability. The USDA

National Farmland Inventory schema is also the basis for determining eligible lands for federal funding of the acquisition of conservation easements under the USDA's Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program.

OP respectfully requests that, should HB 443 be passed out of this Committee, the bill be amended to fund a two-year study and mapping project to: (1) develop recommendations on how the USDA soils classification system and soils database or other classification systems might be used to map agricultural productivity potential in Hawaii; (2) determine how to make effective use of agricultural classifications in regulating agricultural land use; and (3) update agricultural productivity maps based on recommendations for a preferred classification system. OP estimates that the project cost would be \$150,000 for the first phase of the study, and \$150,000 for the second phase of mapping.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

finance1-Kim

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Monday, March 02, 2015 9:39 AM
To: FINTestimony
Cc: micah@hfbf.org
Subject: *Submitted testimony for HB443 on Mar 3, 2015 11:00AM*

HB443

Submitted on: 3/2/2015

Testimony for FIN on Mar 3, 2015 11:00AM in Conference Room 308

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Chris Manfredi	Hawaii Farm Bureau	Support	No

Comments:

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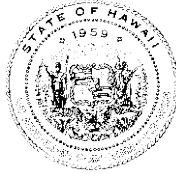
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Statement of
Daniel E. Orodenker
Executive Officer
Land Use Commission

Before the
House Committee on Finance
March 3, 2015
11:00 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 308

In consideration of
HB 443
MAKING AN APPROPRIATION TO UPDATE AGRICULTURAL
SOIL CLASSIFICATIONS AND MAPS

Chair Luke, Vice Chair Nishimoto, and members of the Committee on Finance:

The Land Use Commission (LUC) supports the intent of HB 443 that seeks to update and modernize the soil classifications to make them a more accurate and better tool for decision makers. The Land Study Bureau (LSB) classifications that currently serve as a guide to regulating uses within the State Agricultural District were done decades ago and may benefit from a fresh look.

The LUC lacks the technical expertise and staff to conduct or direct such a study. We have discussed some possible options with the State Office of Planning and defer to their testimony.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND PERMITTING
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March 3, 2015

The Honorable Sylvia Luke, Chair
and Members of the Committee on Finance
Hawaii House of Representatives
Hawaii State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Luke and Members:

Subject: House Bill No. 443
Relating to Soil Classification Map Update

The Department of Planning and Permitting (DPP) has **comments** on House Bill No. 443, which would appropriate funds for the Office of Planning and Land Use Commission to update agricultural soil classifications and maps.

We agree that current maps are, in several ways, out of date. They were done during the plantation era of agriculture, when long-range development plans were not yet adopted. Since then, both the State and counties have long-range plans that direct where urban development should be encouraged to accommodate population and economic growth. As a result, on Oahu about 17,000 acres of land have been redistricted away from the State Agricultural District since 1970, making new soil classification of these lands of limited value.

Chapter 205, Hawaii Revised Statutes, sets forth a process for determining Important Agricultural Lands (IAL), as mandated by the State Constitution. To what extent does an updated soil classification system overlap this mandate? For your information, the City and County of Honolulu has begun mapping IAL, and hopes to submit our recommendations to the State Land Use Commission early next year. It is unlikely that we will be able to consider any new classification system, unless we delay our process.

The Honorable Sylvia Luke, Chair
and Members of the Committee on Finance
Hawaii House of Representatives
Hawaii State Capitol
Re: House Bill 443
March 3, 2015
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Before updating maps, there should be a discussion on what the classification system should address. Clearly, the actual soil types remain unchanged, but perhaps their relationship to agricultural needs should first be confirmed.

Therefore, we suggest that the criteria for creating a framework for an agricultural classification system first be developed. It should address the following:

- Should the mapping address only undeveloped land?
- Should the mapping address only lands in the State Agricultural and Conservation Districts?
- Should the mapping address lands zoned by the counties for agricultural purposes?
- Should the process of defining IAL lands be held in abeyance until a new classification system is completed?
- How are the maps intended to be used? Will they be used for broad, regional planning, or detailed for project-specific evaluation?
- Are there specific types of crops or other agricultural uses that should be accommodated?

The City and County of Honolulu is willing to participate in any discussions that would address above. Thank you for this opportunity to testify on House Bill No. 443.

Very truly yours,



George I. Atta, FAICP
Director

GIA:ks