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February 3, 2014

HEARING BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

TESTIMONY ON SB 1149
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Room 414
2:45 PM

Aloha Chair Ruderman, Vice Chair Riviere, and Members of the Committee:

I am Christopher Manfredi, President of the Hawaii Farm Bureau (HFB). Organized since 1948, the HFB is comprised of 1,932 farm family members statewide, and serves as Hawaii's voice of agriculture to protect, advocate and advance the social, economic and educational interest of our diverse agricultural community.

HFB strongly supports SB 1149 appropriating funds for the operation, repair, maintenance, and improvement of the East Kauai Water Users' Cooperative irrigation systems.

The East Kauai Water Users' Cooperative, a volunteer group, has operated the East Kauai Irrigation System for more than eight years, servicing more than 12,500 acres of agricultural land. Without the volunteer effort of the cooperative, the 21-mile irrigation system would have been abandoned and Kauai farmers left without water.

The repair and maintenance of our irrigation systems is critical because our farmers and ranchers depend on these irrigation systems for their operations. Water availability is a basic necessity for farmers and ranchers to maintain and expand their production, particularly in times of drought manifested on many islands as a result of a changing climate. Moreover, a reliable water supply is a key factor when Hawaii's farmers and ranchers are making decisions to start new or to expand existing operations.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this measure.