

**DAVID Y. IGE**  
Governor

**JOSH GREEN**  
Lt. Governor



State of Hawaii  
**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**  
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**PHYLLIS SHIMABUKURO-GEISER**  
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

**MORRIS M. ATTA**  
Deputy to the Chairperson

**TESTIMONY OF PHYLLIS SHIMABUKURO-GEISER**  
**CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

**BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE**

**FEBRUARY 5, 2020**  
**8:35 A.M.**  
**CONFERENCE ROOM 312**

**HOUSE BILL NO. 2723**  
**RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION**

Chairperson Creagan and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 2723, relating to agricultural production. This bill appropriates funds from the general fund to the Hawaii Department of Agriculture for fiscal year 2020-2021 to develop and implement a tropical flower and foliage plant material distribution program. That program requires the Department to collaborate with agricultural growers and researchers to develop and implement a program that obtains and safely distributes disease- and insect-free tropical plant materials to Hawaii farmers. The Department opposes the measure and offers comments.

The bill does not define what would be considered tropical plant materials and would also turn the Department into an importer, breeder, producer, and distributor of tropical plant materials, thereby competing directly with the many existing nurseries both in State and out-of-state that produce plants for sale in Hawaii. The bill does not specify the funding source for this endeavor, nor does it outline whether farmers will purchase plants from the Department or get them for free, the latter of which would result in taxpayer funds subsidizing farmers. Additionally, as the Department's Plant Quarantine



Branch is also the agency charged with regulating the import of plants, the Department would have a conflict of interest as both the importer and regulator.

The Department concurs with the goal of distributing disease- and insect-free plant materials, as a way to prevent the introduction and movement of harmful invasive species. However, there are other ways to work towards this goal without creating a State-run monopoly. For instance, Hawaii could institute a nursery licensing program along the lines of those already in operation in many states. These fee-based programs require periodic inspections for plant pest cleanliness and hold nursery owners accountable for maintaining their stock in a pest-free status. This encourages nurseries to implement quality control programs and to source plants from reputable distributors, with an end result being that consumers benefit by purchasing higher quality and healthier plants and the risk of introduction and spread of invasive species is reduced. To this end, it is noted that the current measure will not result in preventing existing pests from infesting the proposed State-produced plants once they are distributed, but a licensing program would encourage business owners to take actions to protect their plants from pests already in the surrounding environment.

Another alternative is to create additional regulations in Hawaii Administrative Rules (HAR) 4-70 to specify the plant species and varieties that would need additional regulations, thereby creating the quarantine requirements, diagnostic measures, and import requirements. The industry can already petition the Board to enact a rule change pursuant to HAR 4-1-23. Doing it this way would increase the regulation but put the burden on the importer to comply as opposed to having the state shoulder the burden. It would also really limit what can be imported, lessening the likelihood of a new pest introduction.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

**HB-2723**

Submitted on: 1/30/2020 9:48:50 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/5/2020 8:35:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Benton Kealii Pang, Ph.D.	Individual	Support	No

## Comments:

As a native Hawaiian conservationist, I support HB2723. This bill requires the Department of Agriculture to collaborate with agricultural growers and researchers to develop and implement a program to safely distribute disease- and insect-free tropical plant materials to Hawai'i farmers. We need to do more to protect Hawai'i from the spread of invasive species. Please pass HB2723.

Benton Kealii Pang, Ph.d.

**HB-2723**

Submitted on: 2/4/2020 8:30:00 AM

Testimony for AGR on 2/5/2020 8:35:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Carver Wilson	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Good Morning,

I am a Protea grower on Maui and wish to support the bill to encourage clean propagative material for new plantings. We face a lot of invasive species and diseases that affect our flowers, which we sell locally and across the nation. It is important that Hawaii protect and promote our Agriculture efforts. In order to compete globally, yes globally, we need to have better access to new, stronger varieties and plants. I know that other flower growing groups share this perspective. Thank you,

Carver Wilson



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
THE THIRTIETH LEGISLATURE  
REGULAR SESSION OF 2020

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

Rep. Richard P. Creagan, Chair  
Rep. Lynn DeCoite, Vice Chair

Wednesday, February 5, 2020 8:35 a.m.  
Conference Room 312  
State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street

**RE: HB2723 RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION.** Requires the Department of Agriculture to collaborate with agricultural growers and researchers to develop and implement a program to safely distribute disease- and insect-free tropical plant materials to Hawaii farmers. Appropriates funds.

My name is Jon Tanouye and I am the current President of the Orchid Growers of Hawaii (OGOH).

**OGOH Supports HB2723**

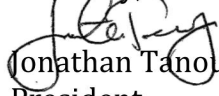
We believe this bill will help support our orchid industry into the future. These days it seems that there is a new pest or disease found every day. With the cost and current concerns on chemicals, it is in the best interests of a grower to be able to start with material that is free of both pests and diseases.

Currently many of our growers have to deal with thrips infecting and damaging our dendrobium. To be able to continue growing in the most productive way requires us to have access to a clean source for materials. That is why we support this bill.

We would like to continue to be a productive part of Hawaii's agriculture and continue to grow beautiful orchids and so we ask for your consideration to support this bill.

If you have any other questions you may contact me to discuss and I can be reached by phone at 808-959-3535 and email [jon@greenpointnursery.com](mailto:jon@greenpointnursery.com).

Sincerely,

  
Jonathan Tanouye  
President

Orchid Growers of Hawaii (OGOH)



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
THE THIRTIETH LEGISLATURE  
REGULAR SESSION OF 2020

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**RE: HB2723 RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION.** Requires the Department of Agriculture to collaborate with agricultural growers and researchers to develop and implement a program to safely distribute disease- and insect-free tropical plant materials to Hawaii farmers. Appropriates funds.

My name is Thong Teng Neo and am the current President of the Hawaii Tropical Flower Council (HTFC). HTFC is a statewide association of commodity organizations, i.e.: anthurium, orchid, protea, tropic flowers and foliage, blooming and foliage plants. The Hawai'i Tropical Flower Council directs promotion and supports research of Hawaii's tropical flower industry. Each of the state's major flower commodity groups (anthuriums, orchids, proteas, tropic flowers and foliage, blooming and foliage plants) is represented on the council's board of directors. HTFC serves as a non-profit Hawaii Corporation to promote for its commodity groups and other producers of tropical horticulture grown in the State of Hawaii.

**HTFC Supports HB2723**

Our industry would be grateful to receive the assistance of both the Department of Agriculture and the University of CTAHR's researchers in finding and distributing clean propagative material. We believe this assistance would allow our industry to expand the products that we provide as well as allow new farmers to join our industry.

There is a great burden on a farmer from the beginning to have pest and disease-free crops. Currently there have been multiple virus that have limited the reproduction of some of our tropical plants, such as the new viruses to red ginger that were diagnosed by UH CTAHR.

Hawaii's Flowers as a brand is supported by the exceptional quality of the flowers and ornamentals we grow. To continue supporting our industry, we need to make sure they have access to propagative material that will live up to that quality. We

HTFC ■ P.O. Box 4400 ■ Hilo, HI 96720 ■ [www.hawaiitropicalflowercouncil.org](http://www.hawaiitropicalflowercouncil.org)





believe that the Department of Ag can support us in this and we believe that UH CTAHR has the expertise to help.

Thank you for taking the time to read this testimony and if you have any questions, I can be reached at [neo@greenpointnursery.com](mailto:neo@greenpointnursery.com) or 808 959 3535 ext. 2615.

Sincerely,

Thong Teng Neo  
President  
Hawaii Tropical Flower Council





# Hawaii Floriculture and Nursery Association

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
THE THIRTIETH LEGISLATURE  
REGULAR SESSION OF 2020

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

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Rep. Lynn DeCoite, Vice Chair

Wednesday, February 5, 2020 8:35 a.m.  
Conference Room 312  
State Capitol  
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RE: HB2723 RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION. Requires the Department of Agriculture to collaborate with agricultural growers and researchers to develop and implement a program to safely distribute disease- and insect-free tropical plant materials to Hawaii farmers. Appropriates funds.

My name is Eric S. Tanouye and I am the President for the Hawaii Floriculture and Nursery Association. HFNA is a statewide umbrella organization with approximately 300 members. Our membership is made up with breeders, hybridizers, propagators, growers, shippers, wholesalers, retailers, educators, and the allied industry, which supports our efforts in agriculture.

The Hawaii Floriculture and Nursery Association (HFNA) **SUPPORTS House Bill 2723**

The current demand for Hawaii's tropical flowers and ornamentals is higher than we can currently meet. This is due to the high quality, high service and diverse products that is provided by Hawaii. That is why this bill is vital to the future of our floriculture industry. The most important part of farming is being able to farm and produce crops. Crops that are healthy and disease free, that can serve as a symbol for high quality. To make this possible, it is important to start with plants that are free of pests and disease. This is accomplished by having a resource to go back to if your plants do get infected. With a good source of clean propagation, our industry will be able to focus on doing what farmers do best; growing and farming.

We have experienced many pests and diseases that have impacted our yields. All aspects of our floriculture industry have had to deal with their own unique types of pests and diseases, Anthurium has faced challenges with nematodes and bacterial blight, Orchids have had to contend with thrips, while tropical flowers such as red ginger, currently have





## Hawaii Floriculture and Nursery Association

multiple new viruses. These diseases and pests can force a premature clearing of fields, making a grower have to start over or consider other costly procedures.

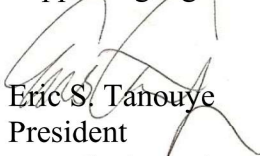
We believe this program can work with the support of UH-CTAHR researchers, who will be able to assist us in finding clean and even new propagative material, that in turn can be distributed to our industry. This will allow our nurserymen and women the opportunity to produce enough to meet demand and limit the importation of plant materials imported from foreign and US mainland suppliers, helping to reduce the risks of imported invasive pests that may arrive unintentionally.

It's important that we also help emerging nurserymen and women so that they can begin with clean and healthy plant material that will help them increase their odds tremendously to be successful. We hope this can also lead to an increase in protea growers who have had to deal with slow propagation and fungus that develops on their cuttings. Our industry needs to be able to offer a diverse product line so that Hawaii can maintain a reputation of being the ideal place to purchase tropical flowers and ornamentals of all varieties. As mentioned earlier we have just discovered four or more different viruses that are affecting our ginger. We consider ginger one of the staple products of tropical flowers and it is important that we continue to be able to provide this iconic tropical flower.

We ask that you support our industry and agriculture, so that we may continue to bring the beauty of Hawaii to others through flowers and ornamentals.

If you have any questions at this time, I would be happy to discuss them and can be reached by phone at 808-959-3535 ext 22, cell 960-1433 and email [eric@greenpointnursery.com](mailto:eric@greenpointnursery.com).

Supporting Agriculture and Hawaii,



Eric S. Tanouye  
President

Hawaii Floriculture and Nursery Association



P.O. Box 253, Kunia, Hawai'i 96759  
Phone: (808) 848-2074; Fax: (808) 848-1921  
e-mail [info@hfbf.org](mailto:info@hfbf.org); [www.hfbf.org](http://www.hfbf.org)

**LATE**

February 5, 2020

HEARING BEFORE THE  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

**TESTIMONY ON HB 2723**  
RELATING TO SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL PROTECTION

Room 312  
8:35 AM

Aloha Chair Creagan, Vice Chair DeCoite, and Members of the Committee:

I am Brian Miyamoto, Executive Director of the Hawaii Farm Bureau (HFB). Organized since 1948, the HFB is comprised of 1,800 farm family members statewide, and serves as Hawaii's voice of agriculture to protect, advocate and advance the social, economic and educational interests of our diverse agricultural community.

**The Hawaii Farm Bureau supports HB 2723**, which requires the Department of Agriculture to collaborate with agricultural growers and researchers to develop and implement a program to safely distribute disease- and insect-free tropical plant materials to Hawaii farmers.

Many tropical flower species face new threats from insects and diseases. For example, the ginger coming in the floral trade has succumbed to a new virus on Oahu. Commercial production has significantly declined. As new plantings are installed clean fresh material is needed to prevent it's spread. Because the disease is a virus, diseased plants may not be obvious in its early stages. A guaranteed clean source of material is important.

For these reasons, HFB respectfully requests your strong support of this measure.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on this important subject.

**LATE**

**HB-2723**

Submitted on: 2/5/2020 4:47:32 AM

Testimony for AGR on 2/5/2020 8:35:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
John R. Gordines	Hawaii Tropical Flowers and Foliage AssociationRep	Support	No

Comments:

Rep. Richard Cretan, Chair

Rep. Lynn DeCoite, Vice Chair

My name is John Gordines and I am the president of Hawaii Tropical Flowers and Foliage Association on Kaua'i. HTFFA is a non profit organization of growers, and exporters of tropical flowers and nursery on The Garden Island. We have approximately 40 tropical flower and nursery farms.

There are currently several pests and diseases affecting our products specifically ornamental Gingers. There is an urgency to maintain clean plant material to continue our growing businesses statewide. These diseases have been spreading island wide.

We support HB2723 and respectfully ask that you support our industry and agriculture, so that we may continue to feed the hearts and souls with Hawaiian flowers.

Kauai Aloha

Johnny Gordines

President

Hawaii Tropical Flowers and Foliage Association