



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Higher Education
and
Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment
Tuesday, February 11, 2020 at 3:00 p.m.

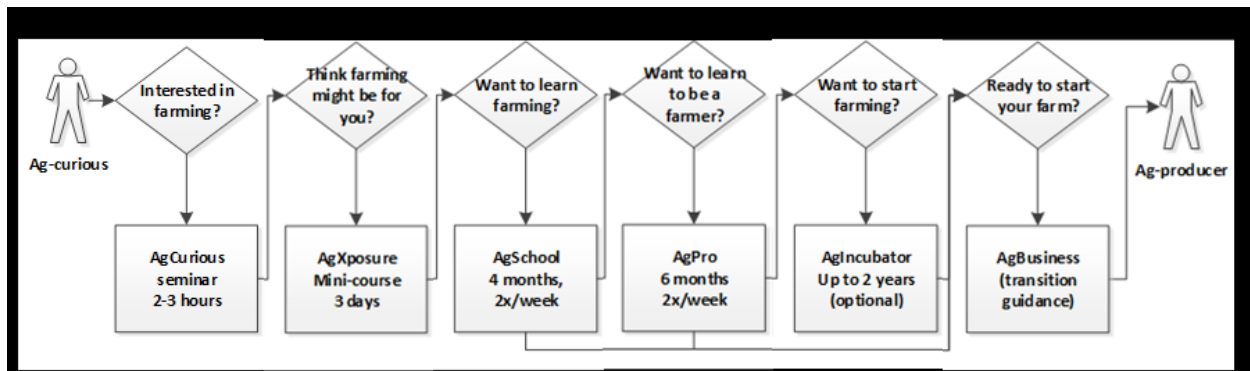
By
Nicholas Comerford, Dean
College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources
And
Michael Bruno, PhD
Provost
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

SB 2723 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Chairs Kim and Gabbard, Vice Chairs Kidani and Ruderman, and members of the Senate Committee on Higher Education and Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 2723 that seeks to fund the GoFarm Hawai'i program. The average age of a farmer in Hawai'i is about 60 years, thus, there is a need to train future farmers for Hawai'i, but where the future farmers will come from is unclear. The College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR) trains students for 4-year degrees in Horticulture, Soil Science, Entomology, Plant Pathology and Animal Science. CTAHR students typically do not go into farming, per se; but are the scientists trained to support agriculture. Of course, they have the skills to farm if they wish, but most do not consider this their future.

The GoFarm Hawai'i program is a fully grant funded, non-degree granting program associated with CTAHR. It is a successful program and its success is based on how the program is organized. The program accepts anyone interested in developing the skills to farm and offers a series of sequential programs that allows participants to proceed through the programs based on their level of interest. Below is a diagram of the series of sequential programs offered by GoFarm Hawai'i, beginning with AgCurious and culminating with AgBusiness.



This bill does an excellent job of outlining the success of this program, which we will not reproduce here. The program has a high rate of success as measured by the number of participants that proceed to farm on their own land, or work on farms. GoFarm Hawai'i has also expanded its program to meet special needs. One example is working with prison inmates to train them to be Agricultural Technicians, with the hope of reducing recidivism.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 2723 provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in our BOR Approved Budget.

DAVID Y. IGE
Governor

JOSH GREEN
Lt. Governor



State of Hawaii
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
1428 South King Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96814-2512
Phone: (808) 973-9600 FAX: (808) 973-9613

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 SENATE COMMITTEES ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND
AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2020
3:00 P.M.
CONFERENCE ROOM 229

SENATE BILL NO. 2723
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Chairpersons Mercado Kim and Gabbard, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 2723 that appropriates funds for the GoFarm Hawaii program and requires GoFarm Hawaii to provide the Chairperson of the Board of Agriculture with an annual report of the program's goals and a semi-annual report outlining program outputs and outcomes.

The Department supports this bill and comments that GoFarm Hawaii has been successful in providing more than 130 farmers a path to leading from considering farming as a career and through a series of courses, prepared them to be a commercial farmer.

GoFarm Hawaii is the only statewide program offering farmers the comprehensive training that includes: **AgCurious** – attracts the interested farmer; **AgXposure** – introduces the interested farmer to the aspects of farming; **AgSchool** – teaches the beginning farmer the spectrum of production topics and includes maintenance of a 1,000 square foot plot of food crops; **AgPro** – retains those beginning farmers that have decided to be a farmer and teaches business planning and practices small-scale commercial production; and **AgIncubator** – rewards the beginning farmer with a ¼ acre of land to start a business and transition off the site.



The appropriation would allow GoFarm Hawaii to meet the demand for the interested farmers as the demand for enrollment often exceeds availability. GoFarm Hawaii has earned the branding of their program as the premier training for beginning farmers and is an example of past success being an indicator of future performance.

The Department supports the bill and asks that its passage not replace or adversely impact the other priorities of the Department.



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

February 11, 2020

HEARING BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

TESTIMONY ON SB 2723
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Room 229
3:00 PM

Aloha Chairs Kim and Gabbard, Vice Chairs Kidani and Ruderman, and Members of the Committees:

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 strongly supports SB 2723, which appropriates funds for the GoFarm Hawaii program. Requires GoFarm Hawaii to provide the Chairperson of the Board of Agriculture with an annual report of the program's goals and a semi-annual report outlining program outputs and outcomes.

Hawaii's farmers and ranchers are aging. The average age exceeds 60 years old and if they were in other professions would be retired. Yet many of these farmers are those that provide to KTA, Safeway, Times, Costco, restaurants, and hotels and truly make a difference in reducing imports. Unfortunately for many, succession plans do not exist and as they retire, the lands go out of agricultural production. To maintain and expand production levels, it's clear that we need a new generation of farmers and ranchers equipped to assume the task of growing crops and livestock. There is an urgent need for interns or apprentices that are willing to not only work on these farms but take over their operations.

GoFarm Hawaii's farmer-training program has been training new farmers since 2012. They have grown to become one of the largest and most successful beginning farmer development programs in the Nation. The GoFarm Hawaii program is helping to address Hawaii's agriculture labor shortage by recruiting and training new farmers. This is critical to achieving Hawaii's goal of doubling food production.

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



67-332 Kaiea Pl.
Waialua, HI 96791-9501
808-383-4481
www.NSEVP.org

February 3, 2020

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT

SUBJECT: Support for SB2723 – GoFarm Hawaii Program
(Date/Time of Hearing: 2/11/2020 at 3:00 p.m., Room 229)

Dear Chairs Kim and Gabbard, Vice Chair Kidani and Ruderman and members of the committee,

On behalf of the North Shore Economic Vitality Partnership (EVP), I would like to extend our full support of SB2723, which will appropriate funds to the GoFarm Hawaii program.

The North Shore EVP was formed in 2015 as a result of a comprehensive, community-based economic analysis that identified the need for a regional food hub to fill serious gaps in the food supply chain of the region. Our non-profit organization worked with community leaders to develop realistic strategic plans focused on securing that critical infrastructure and providing new opportunities for business and creation of new jobs in agriculture in the region. Currently, our major projects include 1) statewide expansion of our GroupGAP (Good Agricultural Practices) farmer training program and 2) developing a food hub on the North Shore of Oahu.

In December 2019 two more farms were USDA Harmonized GAP certified through our GroupGAP program and earlier this month our program passed its USDA External audit with flying colors. Our continued success is due in part to our collaborations across the state, including Go Farm.

During the past year we have participated in Go Farm seminars and workshops to bring on-farm food safety expertise to the trainees. We value the opportunity to get on front of new farmers, providing food safety training, and interacting with these aspiring farmers. GoFarm Hawaii graduates and clients have been members of our GroupGap program, showing their dedication to quality and food safety, looking to increase production and sales, and seeking access to larger markets that often require food safety certification.

GoFarm Hawaii is developing commercial farmers on the North Shore and across the state that are prepared to supply food for local communities. We look forward to these farmers actively contributing to sustainable agriculture in their communities. We will continue to work together in areas of mutual interest especially in areas where we can leverage each other's expertise in support of Hawai'i agriculture. The North Shore EVP strongly supports this measure that will ensure that the GoFarm Hawaii program continues its work to support local farmers.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

Sincerely,

Kevin Kelly
President & CEO
North Shore EVP

Feb 7th, 2020

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

HEARING DATE:

Feb 11, 2020 3:00 PM

PLACE:

Conference Room 229

State Capitol

415 South Beretania Street



Testimony in support of SB 2723 – GoFarm Hawaii Program

Dear Chairs Gabbard and Kim, Vice Chairs Ruderman and Kidani, and members of the committees,

Please recognize my strong support for SB 2723, which appropriates funds to the GoFarm Hawai'i program. Shortly after graduating from the program in 2015, I started a farm in Hale'iwa called Counter Culture Organic Farm on five acres of Kamehameha Schools agricultural land. Primarily due to the experience and connections gained through the GoFarm Hawai'i, I was able to secure that initial lease, a second Kamehameha Schools lease for an additional five acres in 2017, and a few months ago signed a 30 acre lease in Waialua to significantly expand our certified organic produce operation.

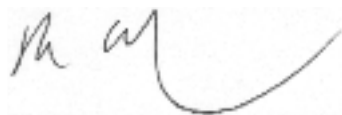
Counter Culture Organic Farm currently has about five acres in cultivation, selling \$120,000 in certified organic produce to local restaurants and households through Farm Link Hawai'i and the Kaka'ako Farmers Market. Our farm employs 3 full-time and 2 part-time people. Our impact on the food system and local economy will continue to grow as we expand into our new 30 acre lease in 2020.

I would not be where I am today without GoFarm Hawai'i. The program gave me the appropriate mix of theory, hands-on practice, and, most importantly, a connection to a strong network of resources to draw upon indefinitely. Since graduating, I've regularly communicated and partnered with GoFarm staff and other alumni to increase our impact on local agriculture.

The GoFarm Hawai'i program is a needed and valuable program for the state of Hawai'i. Their ongoing support, educational opportunities, and network continues to provide a valuable support system for my business.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my support for this Bill.

Sincerely,



Robert Barreca

Owner

Counter Culture Organic Farm

rob@counterculturehawaii.com

(808) 224-1905



Email: communications@ulupono.com

SENATE COMMITTEES ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT
Tuesday, February 11, 2020 — 3:00 p.m. — Room 229

UluPono Initiative supports SB 2723, Relating to Agriculture.

Dear Chair Kim, Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committees:

My name is Amy Hennessey, and I am the Senior Vice President of Communications & External Affairs at UluPono Initiative. We are a Hawai'i-based impact investment firm that strives to improve our community's quality of life by creating more locally produced food; increasing affordable clean renewable energy and transportation options; and better managing waste and fresh water resources.

UluPono supports SB 2723, which appropriates funds for the GoFarm Hawai'i Program (GFH).

Since 2013, UluPono has provided \$250,000 in grant funding to GFH for infrastructure and development of operations on Hawai'i Island, Maui, O'ahu, and Kaua'i. With funding from UluPono and others, we are excited about the growth of the GFH training program.

According to the USDA-NASS Census of Agriculture, there are 7,300 estimated farms in Hawai'i, of which more than 75% earn less than \$25,000 per year. Additionally, of those farms that generate over \$25,000 per year, 65% have principal farm operators that are at least 55 years old. With the high costs of agricultural production here in Hawai'i and the average age of the local farmer climbing, it is of utmost importance for the State to invest in the next generation and to provide a financially viable future for those agricultural operations.

We appreciate that GFH has developed a broad spectrum of classes designed for those with an interest in agriculture. GFH offers the most comprehensive new farmer training program in Hawai'i, including classroom education, hands-on training, business planning, and incubation opportunities.

GFH has a well-received reputation with training the next generation of local producers in the State. Over the past 3 years, 58% of the 127 program graduates have either started their own agricultural businesses (60 graduates) or began working in (14 graduates) the agricultural industry. By training the future agricultural workforce, GFH is directly supporting the State's local food production goals and the creation of a more sustainable Hawai'i.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Amy Hennessey, APR
Senior Vice President, Communications & External Affairs

Investing in a Sustainable Hawai'i



February 7, 2020

Dear Chairs Gabbard and Kim, Vice Chairs Ruderman and Kidani, & members of the committees,

RE: Support for SB2723 – GoFarm Hawaii Program (Date/Time of Hearing: 2/11/2020; 3:00pm)

On behalf of the The Kohala Center, I would like to extend our full support of SB 2723, which will appropriate funds to the GoFarm Hawai'i program.

The Kohala Center is an independent, community-based center for research, conservation, and education located on Hawai'i Island. By focusing on the needs of island residents and the research interests of our university and agency partners, we work on three core areas: energy self-reliance, food self-reliance, and ecosystem health.

Our organization has worked closely with both the GoFarm Hawai'i (GFH) beginning farmer training program and the AgBusiness Team since 2012. Their practical approach to teaching and supporting farmers have increased the number and viability of agricultural businesses throughout the State. The GFH program is the only business development program in the state dedicated to working with and elevating the success of Hawai'i's agricultural entrepreneurs; they are a critical component in Hawai'i's agricultural landscape, providing technical assistance in farmer training, business planning, marketing, production planning, succession planning, and more. GFH piloted its beginning farmer training program on Hawai'i Island at The Kohala Center's Demonstration Farm. We are committed to supporting the success and growth of this program on Hawai'i Island and across the state.

The Kohala Center strongly encourages the support of this valuable program.

Sincerely,



Nicole Milne, Ph.D.
Vice President for Programs
Director of Food and Agriculture Initiatives
The Kohala Center



February 7th, 2020

Emily Emmons

Executive Director, Ho'ola Veteran Services
37 Kaikuono St.
Hilo, HI 96720

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Lito Arkangel
Board Member

SUBJECT: Support for SB2723 – GoFarm Hawaii Program (Date/Time of Hearing: 2/11/2020; 3:00pm)

Dear Chairs Gabbard and Kim, Vice Chairs Ruderman and Kidani, & members of the committees,

Ho'ola Veteran Services is pleased to submit testimony strongly supporting SB 2723, which will appropriate funds to the GoFarm Hawaii program.

Ho'ola Veteran Services provides agriculture training and hands-on experiences for veterans and their families, along with the community in hopes of creating a more sustainable future & well-being for all. Our goal is to increase the number of veterans seeking and securing educational, employment, and entrepreneurial opportunities in the food and agriculture sector in Hawaii.

Our organization has actively partnered with GoFarm Hawaii to provide agriculture training and business education for transitioning veterans interested in a career in agriculture production. For over two years, we've worked together to support veterans going through GFH program, and are looking forward to the expansion of programs to include Hawaii Island veterans.

The GoFarm Hawaii program is an essential part of expanding our local agricultural network. They are educating the next generation of farmers, providing needed support for existing farmers, and helping to develop the overall industry and food security for our future. We look forward to our continued partnership with GoFarm Hawaii and strongly encourage your support for this Bill.

Sincerely,

Emily Emmons

Executive Director
Ho'ola Veteran Services 501c3 d.b.a. Ho'ola Farms

Executive Director
Emily Emmons
808-494-2613
emily@hoolafarms.org



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**BOARD OF
DIRECTORS**

February 7, 2020

Taylor Kellerman
President

SUBJECT: Support for SB2723 – GoFarm Hawaii Program (Date/Time of Hearing:
2/11/2020;3:00pm)

Ethan West
Vice President

Dear Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Ruderman, & members of the committee,

Mark Phillipson
Treasurer

O'ahu RC&D is pleased to submit testimony in full support of HB 2568, which will
appropriate funds to the GoFarm Hawaii program.

Melissa Z. Rhoden
Secretary

Yarrow Flower

Our organization, which has a 20 year track record supporting Hawaii's farms, ranches
and rural communities, has actively and successfully partnered with GoFarm Hawaii on
many initiatives. The GoFarm AgBusiness team recently partnered with us to update the
Hawaii Agribusiness Guidebook, a publicly-available online guide featuring important
points and tips for operating a farm business in Hawaii. They have been active partners
in our Parade of Farms events, the statewide Women Farmers Workshop series, and
various training events that support local farmers..

**EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR**

Dave Elliott

The GoFarm Hawaii program is an essential part of expanding our local agricultural
network. They are educating the next generation of farmers, providing needed support
for existing ones, and helping to develop the overall industry. We look forward to our
continued partnership with GoFarm Hawaii and strongly encourage your support of this
Bill.

Sincerely,

Dave Elliott
Executive Director
Oahu Resource Conservation & Development Council

Committees on Agriculture and Environment and Higher Education

Time: 3:00 p.m.

Date: February 11, 2020

Room: State Capitol Room 229

TESTIMONY

Submitted by the undersigned organizations

To: Dear Chairs Gabbard and Kim, Vice Chairs Ruderman and Kidani, & members of the committees,

RE: In Support of SB2723, Relating to GoFarm Hawai'i

The undersigned organizations are writing to **SUPPORT SB2723**, which proposes to appropriate funds out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii for the GoFarm Hawai'i program to provide agricultural workforce development and support services in business consulting, technical assistance, and beginner farmer training.

Since 2013, GoFarm Hawai'i has trained 330 aspiring farmers at five training sites on four islands. The program has five key activities: 1) Support agribusiness development statewide; 2) Educate agribusinesses and create industry tools; 3) Develop new farmers for Hawai'i; 4) Incubate program graduates; and 5) Train agricultural workers.

GoFarm Hawaii graduates engage throughout Hawai'i's food system as trained producers, informed consumers, and passionate advocates. This growing critical mass of producers will provide not just the agricultural produce, but also the know-how and collaboration for building the systems for processing, manufacturing, specialization, technology, aggregation, scaling, and other efficiencies in support of a robust agricultural industry in Hawai'i.

Farmers and food production activities are the essential building blocks in transforming and sustaining the local food system in Hawai'i. It is of tremendous importance to everyone who eats in the State—government employees as well as private citizens, working adults, school children, the house-less, the military, the visitor industry, the incarcerated and more. A successful GoFarm program contributes to the larger work of our organizations, and we wholeheartedly support this bill and urge the Committee to **PASS SB2723**.

Bronson Azama, President
Hawai'i State Future Farmers
of America (FFA)

Natalie McKinney, Executive Director
Kōkua Hawai'i Foundation

Māhealani Matsuzaki
Kamehameha Schools

Kehaulani Padilla, Founder
Waimānalo Market Co-op

SB-2723

Submitted on: 2/3/2020 8:42:43 PM

Testimony for HRE on 2/11/2020 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Jay Hartwell	Individual	Support	Yes

Comments:

SUBJECT: Support for SB 2723 – GoFarm Hawaii Program (Date/Time of Hearing: 2/11/2020; 3:00pm)

Dear Chairs Gabbard and Kim, Vice Chairs Ruderman and Kidani, & Members of the Committees:

I am writing in support of SB 2723, which appropriates funds to the GoFarm Hawaii program. As a graduating student of GoFarm's Windward Oahu Cohort 10 AgSchool program (along with my 27-year-old son Tom), we are learning hands-on, agriculture production and marketing skills and building a network that can support our future in the agricultural industry.

During the program, we have a weekly, evening class about farming subjects with guest speakers, while during the day we manage (seed, weed, harvest) a plot of land, market and sell our vegetables, develop a business plan, and examine the financial viability of specific crops and our business.

If we are accepted into and complete the next, six-month phase of GoFarm (called AgPro), my son and I plan to start a farm on his grandfather's land and will continue using the support services and network that the program offers.

The GoFarm Hawaii program is a needed and valuable program for the state of Hawaii. Their ongoing support, educational opportunities, and network are essential as Tom and I plan for our new business, which will provide more food security for our community. Our plan would not be possible or affordable to implement without GoFarm's training and support.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my support of this Bill.

Sincerely,

Jay Hartwell

AgSchool Student, Windward Cohort 10

SB-2723

Submitted on: 2/4/2020 12:31:14 AM

Testimony for HRE on 2/11/2020 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Jennifer Azuma Chrupalyk	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

SB-2723

Submitted on: 2/4/2020 10:46:11 AM

Testimony for HRE on 2/11/2020 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Amy Brinker	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

SB-2723

Submitted on: 2/4/2020 9:30:04 PM

Testimony for HRE on 2/11/2020 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Micah Hicks	Individual	Support	Yes

Comments:

Aloha,

I am writing in support of SB2723. As someone from the islands, I have long been concerned at our lack of food sustainability, the steady deterioration through disuse of agricultural lands our constitution promises to preserve and protect, and the lack of a varied local economy. There has long been a significant gap between our ambitions for a better economy and a more vibrant local food supply. The GoFarm program serves as one of our few bridges across that gap. As a student, the GoFarm program has provided me with invaluable experience and knowledge both scientific and practical. It attracts students that reflect the diversity and promise of our state; there are in my cohort librarians, engineers, landscapers, and educators, old and young, and people from the many ethnic groups that make up our culture. It has connected us to the land, deepened our sense of civic duty-as evidenced by this testimony-and provided us with the network, skills and connections to succeed in our ambitions. Studies from UHERO and other institutions have pointed out the necessity of developing strong economic clusters before there is cost competitiveness and export growth potential. The GoFarm program is doing just that here and now. GoFarm graduates are at this moment adding value to our economy; keeping spending in this state; providing jobs that pay well above the minimum wage; and creating the kinds of services that are vitally needed to increase the agricultural productivity of our islands. I can think of no other effort of the legislature in this area that has as much promise or as many demonstrable results as the GoFarm program. I strongly urge you to approve full funding for the GoFarm program.

SB-2723

Submitted on: 2/7/2020 9:05:21 AM

Testimony for HRE on 2/11/2020 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Augusto Decastro	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Dear Chairs Gabbard and Kim, Vice Chairs Ruderman and Kidani, & members of the committees,

Please recognize my strong support for SB 2723, which appropriates funds to the GoFarm Hawaii program. Since graduating from the program, I started a small farm business. The program taught me production skills, provided business support, and a gave me a network that allowed my business to grow.

The GoFarm Hawaii program is a needed and valuable program for the state of Hawaii. Their ongoing support, educational opportunities, and network continues to provide a valuable support system for current and future GoFarmers.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my support of this Bill.

Sincerely,

Augusto Decastro

SB-2723

Submitted on: 2/6/2020 10:49:24 PM

Testimony for HRE on 2/11/2020 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Koon-Hui Wang	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

As the state of Hawaii farmers are aging, we need to train newer generation of farmers. Many new farmers are coming from a different career background than farming. In order for these farmers to be successful, effective farmers training program is critical. GoFarm Hawaii offers one such new farmers training program that is growing successfully currently on four islands in the state. Appropriate fund to grow GoFarm would be most rewarding for the state to see the potential Hawaii agriculture will become. We need educated and well trained farmers to pay good attention to the stewardship of our environment. We need farmers that have good business plan to be successful and offering produce competitive to the import market. We need farmers that can be compliant with food safety act to protect our consumers. GoFarm Hawaii has 10 years of experience developing this new farmers training program and has established all the collaborative networks needed. Hawaii need this successful momentum to grow our food self-sufficiency. Having more successful local food industries would help Hawaii to keep more revenue within the state, thus overall health of our economy.

SB-2723

Submitted on: 2/8/2020 7:22:07 PM

Testimony for HRE on 2/11/2020 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Rodger Hansen	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I own and operate a small farm in Hakalau HI which supplements my family income. Over the last five years I have hired several former GoFarm Students to work on our farm because of their diverse and deep agricultural knowledge about farming in Hawaii. All these workers learned these skills from the GoFarm Hawaii Program. I feel that GoFarm Hawaii is a true benefit to the goals of improving agricultural output in Hawaii.

Your consideration is appreciated.

Yours truly,

Rodger Hansen
Kua Aina Farm

Personal Testimony Presented Before
Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment
Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair
Senator Russell E. Ruderman, Vice Chair
and
Senate Committee on Higher Education
Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair

Tuesday, February 11, 2020, 3:00 PM

By Charles Kinoshita

Support for SB 2723, Relating to Agriculture

Dear Chairs Gabbard and Mercado Kim, Vice Chairs Ruderman and Kidani, and members of the Senate Committees on Agriculture and Environment, and Higher Education:

My name is Charles Kinoshita. I retired from the University of Hawaii, College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources, one month ago, and I'm presenting testimony as a private citizen in support of SB 2723, which calls for appropriation of funds to support the GoFarm Hawaii (GFH) Program.

Decades ago, prior to joining the University of Hawaii, I was an engineer for, and part of the management team of, the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association (HSPA) Experiment Station. When I first joined HSPA, sugarcane was being cultivated on four Hawaiian islands, covering more than 200,000 acres, and yielding roughly one million tons of sugar per year. Today, no cane is grown in Hawaii for the manufacture of refined sugar.

While sugarcane has disappeared from our landscape, the majority of the lands that once supported cane, though now fallow, still are zoned agricultural and have great potential for diversified crops. These lands can be brought back into commercial agriculture to create the green landscape that is important to the health of our environment and our visitor industry, and support our local economy and food security, if new farmers are able to cultivate those lands skillfully and profitably. In order to increase the number of farmers in Hawaii's diversified agriculture and ensure their success, we need to provide aspiring farmers with the knowledge and skill sets to grow crops better and to operate their agribusinesses more profitably.

GoFarm Hawaii has assembled infrastructure and professionals to grow new farmers on all four islands that previously grew commercial sugarcane. GFH, which offers training in both crop production and business management quite likely is the largest and most successful new farmer training program in the nation. In the last three years, more than 100 trainees graduated from the GFH training program, approximately 60% of the graduates started farm businesses or are supporting other agribusinesses in Hawaii, and 18 farm businesses were incubated on our own program lands. Complementary to the highly successful new farmer training program, the GoFarm Hawaii AgBusiness consulting arm provides one-on-one support to new and existing

farmers statewide, and in 2019 helped more than 60 farmers apply for loans, leases and grants, and develop business plans and value-added products.

Let's be clear... to achieve such high levels of success and positive impacts is costly. GFH has been very successful in competing for contracts and grants at the national, state, and local levels, and has garnered strong support from generous and committed partners in the private sector, government agencies, and philanthropic organizations, but additional funding, as called for in SB 2723, is needed to continue this successful farmer-training and agribusiness-support program.

In closing, I'd like to point-out that I believe so strongly in GFH that, in retirement, I have volunteered to be an uncompensated part of the GFH team so that I may make my own small contribution to the future success of agriculture in Hawaii. I strongly encourage you to support SB 2723 and help GoFarm Hawaii train and provide consulting services to our state's future successful farmers and agripreneurs.

Thank you for the opportunity to present my views.

SB-2723

Submitted on: 2/8/2020 7:20:05 PM

Testimony for HRE on 2/11/2020 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
elizabeth hansen	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Please support HB 2568 so we can continue to fund this GoFund Hawaii Program. This funding is essential because the Go Farm Program teaches its students to have knowledgeable and realistic goals that make a farm profitable. Unless we continue to support GoFarm Hawaii, this important way to increase agricultural knowledge will be lost. As you know, the average age of a farmer in the state of Hawaii is over 60 years old. We must continue to provide useful and comprehensive knowledge of farming techniques and agricultural business planning to our younger generation.

Thank you for support of this bill.

Elizabeth Hansen
Kua Aina Farm

From: [AEN Testimony](#)
To: [Nancy Bernal](#)
Subject: FW: Support for SB2723 – GoFarm Hawaii Program (Date/Time of Hearing: 2/11/2020; 3:00pm)
Date: Tuesday, February 11, 2020 10:24:15 AM

From: Rose Matthews <rose@bearclawfarm.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 4, 2020 9:54 PM
To: AEN Testimony <AENTestimony@capitol.hawaii.gov>
Subject: Support for SB2723 – GoFarm Hawaii Program (Date/Time of Hearing: 2/11/2020; 3:00pm)

Dear Chairs Gabbard and Kim, Vice Chairs Ruderman and Kidani, & members of the committees,

Please recognize my strong support for SB 2723, which appropriates funds to the GoFarm Hawaii program. I started the Windward GoFarm program in 2015. Upon completing the program, I established a small farm business, Bear Claw Farm LLC, in 2016 which currently grows diversified vegetables on 1 acre of land in Waimanalo. I sell produce to local restaurants and via farm stand pop-ups in Waimanalo, Kahalu'u, and Kalihi each week. The GoFarm program solidified my production skills, provided business support, and gave me a network that allows my business to continue growing. I would not be where I am today without the GoFarm program. I am currently on incubator land rented from GoFarm. Without this land option, I would not have been able to start my farm business as the investment and risk would have been essentially impossible. I am now working on my business full-time, happily self-employed, growing hundreds of pounds of produce each month, and am looking forward to a long term commitment of growing food for Oahu.

The GoFarm Hawaii program is a needed and valuable program for the state of Hawaii. Their ongoing support, educational opportunities, and network continues to provide a valuable support system for my business.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my support of this Bill.

Sincerely,
Rose Matthews
Bear Claw Farm LLC
rose@bearclawfarm.com
517-402-6551

Subject: Support for SB2723—GoFarm Hawaii Program (2/11/2020; 3:00pm))

Dear Chairs Gabbard and Kim, Vice Chairs Ruderman and Kidani and members of the committee,

I am in strong support of SB2723, which appropriates funds to the GoFarm Hawaii program. As a former and current student, the GoFarm Hawaii program is a beginner's farmer training program that teaches students practical skills on becoming a farmer such as crop planning, irrigation, pest and disease management, soil amendments, farming goals, marketing, and production. These are skills that are not taught anywhere else in the state. GoFarm Hawaii has been honing their training program for almost a decade and is beginning to see the rewards of their efforts as more students transition from the incubator stage of the program to becoming independent farmers.

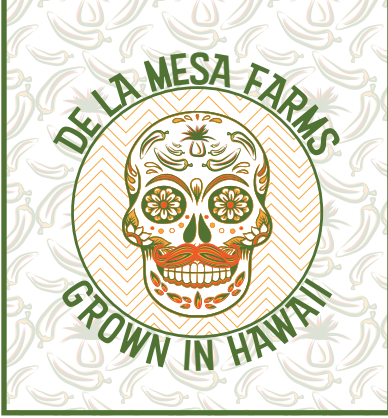
In addition to the practical skills gained, GoFarm Hawaii places a strong emphasis on building a network in the farming and agricultural industry—coordinating field visits to other farms, sponsoring agricultural events such as the Variety Showcase Oahu, and encouraging mentorship programs between established and beginning farmers. As a beginning farmer, the connections made are invaluable.

During the program, I have not only been able to learn about farming, I am actively managing a plot of GoFarm Hawaii land, marketing and selling products, developing a business plan, and looking closely at the financial viability of specific crops and my business. After graduating, I hope to find land to begin to manifest my dream and place all my acquired skills to practice.

For Hawai'i, whose goal is to increase local food production dramatically, GoFarm Hawaii is the first step to obtaining that goal. Farmers face huge challenges in this state. For me, GoFarm Hawaii mitigates some of those challenges through education. Please give your support to GoFarm Hawaii.

Mahalo,

Tina Bushnell
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FROM OUR FARM TO YOUR TABLE

EXPOSING OUR ISLAND TO SUSTAINABLE LATIN PRODUCE

LATE

TESTIMONY OF DE LA MESA LLC

HEARING DATE/TIME: Tuesday, February 11, 2020
3:00 pm
Conference Room 229, State Capitol

TO: Senate Committee on Higher Education
Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment

Re: SB 2723

Dear Chairs Mercado Kim and Gabbard, Vice-Chairs Kidani and Ruderman, and Committee Members:

We **strongly support SB 2723**, which appropriates funds to the GoFarm Hawaii program. My husband and I are graduates of the GoFarm Hawaii program and currently participate in the AgIncubator program.

As you know, farming in Hawaii is a tough proposition between the cost of land, labor and the resources needed to provide our communities with fresh and affordable produce. Our farm, known as De La Mesa Farms, has always had a mission to strengthen our communities and environment by applying organic practices to deliver fresh and affordable produce. Without the GoFarm Hawaii program, we would not have been able to deliver on our mission as quickly and as impactfully as we did.

We launched our business in 2017 with a small urban farm in Kailua producing exclusively microgreens. During that first year, we struggled to supply the market with 4 lbs. of microgreens a week and ended the year in the red (like many new businesses). That same year, however, we were admitted into the GoFarm Hawaii program. Through GoFarm Hawaii's courses and fieldwork, mentorship and networking, we were able to apply the lessons learned directly to our farm operations. Over the last 3 years, we have substantially expanded our operations – thanks in large part to GoFarm Hawaii – such that we regularly supply 2 farmers markets' weekly with over 100 lbs. of salad greens, microgreens and specialty crops such as radishes, beets, carrots, broccoli, tomatoes, cucumbers, etc.; sell produce to local restaurants and hotels; and, also sell community-support agricultural (CSA) subscriptions directly to local families. We are able to provide all this produce as a result of the approx. ¼ acre of land that we currently lease via the GoFarm Hawaii program in Waimanalo.

The GoFarm Hawaii program is the most important driver for creating new commercial farmers in the State of Hawaii. If legislators are committed to food security and expanding our local food system, then support of the GoFarm Hawaii program is absolutely necessary. Their ongoing support, educational opportunities, network and mentorship continues to provide a valuable support system for our farm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Natalie Mesa

On behalf of
De La Mesa LLC
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