



SB782 SD2 HD1
RELATING TO TARO
House Committee on Finance

March 29, 2023

3:00 PM

Room 308

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) offers its **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS** for SB782 SD2, which would establish a grant program to assist kalo farmers in their kalo operations. **OHA asks that the Legislature also require the State of Hawai‘i Department of Agriculture, in its adoption of rules for this program, to also take into special consideration the inequities and disparities faced by “socially disadvantaged farmers in Hawai‘i,” like Native Hawaiian mahi‘ai (farmers), and their unique funding needs.**

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers (SDFR) “as those belonging to groups that have been subject to racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice.”¹ The USDA has affirmed that Native Hawaiians are recognized under the SDFR characterization² and a number of financial support instruments exist through the USDA for SDFRs.³ While this distinction and the needs of those within this designation exist at the federal level, the State of Hawai‘i has yet to adopt the necessary policies and mechanisms to address inequities and disparities faced by socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, like Native Hawaiian mahi‘ai. **As the principal public agency in the State responsible for the performance, development, and coordination of programs and activities relating to Native Hawaiians, OHA asks this legislature to ensure that Native Hawaiian farmers and ranchers are provided equitable farm assistance opportunities, such as the grants proposed through this measure.**

OHA offers the following amendment to this measure by adding a subsection (9) after subsection (c)(8) on Page 6, Lines 9-13, to address inequities faced by socially disadvantaged farmers and to read:

"§141- _____ Grant program; taro farmers. (a) There is established in the department of agriculture a grant program to

¹ USDA Economic Research Service, Socially Disadvantaged, Beginning, Limited Resource, and Female Farmers and Ranchers, available at <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/farm-economy/socially-disadvantaged-beginning-limited-resource-and-female-farmers-and-ranchers/#:~:text=The%20USDA%20defines%20socially%20disadvantaged,and%20Asian%20or%20Pacific%20I slander.>

² USDA Farm Service Agency, Minority and Women Farmers and Ranchers, available at <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/farm-loan-programs/minority-and-women-farmers-and-ranchers/index>.

³ USDA Farm Service Agency, Loans for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Fact Sheet 2019, available at https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdfiles/FactSheets/2019/sda_loans-fact_sheet-aug_2019.pdf.



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assist taro farmers in meeting the costs of cultivating taro for consumption.

(b) The program shall provide grants to qualified applicants with the following terms and conditions:

- (1) The applicant shall submit to the department of agriculture a substantive plan for increasing taro production, including activities in which the applicant intends to engage using grant funds;
- (2) The total amount of a grant to any one applicant shall not exceed \$ _____ ; and
- (3) If the applicant is a limited liability company, partnership, sole proprietorship, nonprofit organization, or agricultural cooperative, the applicant shall meet any insurance requirements associated with the applicant's business classification or designation.

(c) Grants issued pursuant to this section shall include the following:

- (1) Any grant shall be used exclusively for the purposes of assisting taro farmers in meeting the costs of cultivating taro for consumption;
- (2) A grant applicant shall submit to the department of agriculture a substantive plan for increasing taro production, including activities that the applicant intends to engage in using grant funds;
- (3) A grant applicant shall comply with all applicable federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination against any person on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, creed, sex, age, sexual orientation, disability, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal or state law;



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- (4) A grant shall not be used for purposes of providing entertainment or perquisites;
- (5) A grant applicant shall comply with other requirements as the department of agriculture may prescribe;
- (6) All activities undertaken using grant funds received shall comply with all applicable federal, state, and county statutes and ordinances;
- (7) A grant applicant shall indemnify and hold harmless the State of Hawaii and its officers, agents, and employees from and against any and all claims arising out of or resulting from activities carried out, or projects undertaken, using grant funds provided under this section, and shall procure sufficient insurance to provide this indemnification if requested to do so by the department of agriculture;
- (8) A grant applicant shall agree to make available to the department of agriculture all records the applicant may have relating to the grant, to allow state agencies to monitor the applicant's compliance with this section; and
- (9) A grant shall be made specifically for socially disadvantaged farmers cultivating taro for consumption.
- (d) The department of agriculture shall adopt rules pursuant to chapter 91 to carry out the purposes of the grant program. Grant applications shall be reviewed and approved by an administrative staff member of the department of agriculture.
- (e) As used in this section, "qualified applicant" means a farmer cultivating taro plants, taro corm, taro leaf, and taro huli."



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(f) As used in this section, "socially disadvantaged farmer" has the same meaning as defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture."

OHA appreciates this opportunity to offer its support with amendments on SB782 SD2 HD1 and **asks that the Legislature level the field for socially disadvantaged farmers by amending this measure with OHA's recommendation.** Mahalo nui loa.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

SYLVIA LUKE
Lt. Governor



SHARON HURD
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

MORRIS M. ATTA
Deputy to the Chairperson

State of Hawai'i
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
KA 'OIHANA MAHI'AI
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TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 29, 2023
3:00 P.M.
CONFERENCE ROOM 308 AND VIDEO CONFERENCING

SENATE BILL NO. 782 SD2, HD1
RELATING TO TARO

Chair Yamashita and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on Senate Bill 782 SD2, HD1. This bill appropriates funds to the Department of Agriculture to provide grants to Hawaii farming groups for distribution to taro farmers. The Department fully supports this measure.

The Department acknowledges the critical importance of protecting and perpetuating the traditional practice of taro farming as part of Hawaii's cultural identity and further appreciates this legislative effort to help taro farmers in meeting the cost of cultivating taro for local consumption, and beyond, to export markets. The overall budget of this program is estimated at \$1.5 million in each of the fiscal years, 2024 and 2025.

Thank you for your consideration and the opportunity to testify on this measure.



RICHARD T. BISSEN, JR.
Mayor

KEKUHAUPIO R. AKANA
Managing Director



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
COUNTY OF MAUI
200 SOUTH HIGH STREET
WAILUKU, MAUI, HAWAII 96793
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March 28, 2023

TO: Honorable Rep. Rep. Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
Honorable Rep. Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair
House Committee on Finance

FROM: Richard T. Bissen, Jr., Mayor
Rogerene K.M. Arce, Director of Agriculture

DATE: March 28, 2023

SUBJECT: SUPPORT OF SB782 SD2, RELATING TO TARO

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **SUPPORT** of this important measure. The purpose of this measure is to appropriate funds to the department of agriculture to provide grants to Hawaii farming groups to be disbursed to taro farmers.

Our administration **SUPPORTS** this measure for the following reasons:

1. Taro is a culturally important staple starch to Native Hawaiians and a high yielding crop that is underproduced in Hawai'i. This measure will contribute to increasing the cultivation and industry of taro in Hawai'i.
2. Taro is a highly resilient crop that can withstand flood events, storms, and hurricanes which makes it a good source during times of food shortages.
3. Funding to improve accessibility to land, water, mentoring and for incentives to make farming taro affordable is needed. This measure will support the growth of taro farming in Hawai'i, and contribute to the preservation of an essential cultural practice.

For the foregoing reasons, we offer our **SUPPORT** of this measure.



Food+ Policy Internship 2023

food@purplemaia.org

March 27, 2023

To: Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and members of the House Committee on Finance

Subject: **SB782, Relating to Taro**

Food+ Policy strongly supports SB782, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Agriculture to provide grants to Hawai'i farming groups to be disbursed to taro farmers.

Taro farmers need support in order to thrive and be productive to serve their community. By helping taro farmers thrive, we not only help them to make a prosperous livelihood in which they are reconnecting with their livelihood that sustained them since ancient times, but we also help them provide more taro for the state to be consumed by Native Hawaiians so they can reconnect with a food that is culturally significant. We also help Hawai'i become more sustainable and ship in less taro. Currently the state ships in several hundred thousands pounds of taro annually when that taro could be grown by our Native Hawaiian taro farmers who are small farmers.

We humbly ask that you strongly support SB782 so that we can help our taro farmers with much needed grants so they can use the funds to make necessary purchases in order to meet the needs of taro in the state.

Taro is a very culturally significant food to Native Hawaiians. Currently, taro is not abundant in the state and therefore, most Hawaiians cannot afford to eat taro as regularly as they eat bread or crackers. And yet, it is taro that is the staple of the Native Hawaiians. If taro was more affordable because more of it is grown in Hawai'i, more families can reap the benefits of eating a healthy, sustainable, culturally significant food.

Kelsey Amos & the Food+ Policy Team
#fixourfoodsystem

The Food+ Policy internship develops student advocates who learn work skills while increasing civic engagement to become emerging leaders. We focus on good food systems policy because we see the importance and potential of the food system in combating climate change and increasing the health, equity, and resiliency of Hawai'i communities.

In 2023, the cohort of interns are undergraduate and graduate students from throughout the UH System. They are a mix of traditional and nontraditional students, including parents and veterans, who have backgrounds in education, farming, public health, nutrition, and Hawaiian culture.



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March 29, 2023

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

TESTIMONY ON SB 782, SD2, HD1
RELATING TO TARO

Conference Room 308 & Videoconference
3:00 PM

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice-Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Committee:

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

The Hawai'i Farm Bureau supports SB 782, SD2, HD1, which establishes and appropriates funds for a grant program in the Department of Agriculture to provide grants to taro farmers in meeting the costs of cultivating taro for consumption.

The Hawai'i Farm Bureau recognizes taro's importance in Hawai'i's cultural identity and role in local food security. This measure is aimed to assist taro farmers in their efforts to increase their production and viability. We support this effort to improve the taro farmer's ability to not only sustain themselves but also to expand their long-term success.

HFB supports any initiative that reduces the cost of production so that locally produced goods can compete with imported products, strengthening our local economy.

Hawai'i Farm Bureau Policy states: "State tax and monetary policies should be designed to encourage private initiative to help stabilize farm economics in the State of Hawai'i, to promote employment and economic growth, and to distribute the tax burden equitably. Further such policy should be used by the state, when appropriate, to encourage agricultural growth and expansion."

HFB supports SB 782, SD2, HD1, which is an investment in Hawai'i's taro farmers.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of this measure.



Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action (HAPA) Supports: SB782 SD2 HD1

Wednesday, March 29, 2023 3:00 p.m. Conference Room 308

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa and Members of the Committee,

We support SB782 SD2 HD1 which establishes and appropriates funds for a grant program in the Department of Agriculture to provide grants to taro farmers in meeting the costs of cultivating taro for consumption.

SB782 SD2 HD1 is a critical step towards supporting native traditional food ways, farming and food security for Hawai'i. We need to do everything we can to support expansion of farming and particularly the cultivation of taro (kalo) which is so culturally significant and is such an important part of our landscape, history, food security and community.

We believe this measure is a great way to support a native cultural practice and Hawai'i's staple food. Supporting taro farmers will also help to keep native Hawaiian traditional and customary cultural practices & its vital agricultural knowledge alive.

Kalo is a valued landscape and is recognized as the State Plant. Kalo farmers need and deserve support to ensure taro farming continues to grow and expand into the future. This measure helps to incentivize farmers to grow taro, one of the healthiest staple starch foods available.

SB782 SD2 HD1 will create economic incentives for taro farmers' and could reduce the cost of poi for local families. In doing so, this measure could help make taro more widely accessible and enable Hawaiian families to reconnect with this culturally important food source.

Please support SB782 SD2 HD1.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne Frederick', written in a cursive style.

Anne Frederick
Executive Director



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State President

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Christian Zuckerman
Wai'anae, O'ahu

Ted Radovich
Waimanalo, O'ahu

Vincent Kimura
Honolulu, O'ahu

Ray Maki
Kauai

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the House Finance Committee,

The Hawaii Farmers Union United (HFUU) is a 501(c)(5) agricultural advocacy nonprofit representing a network of over 2,500 family farmers and their supporters across the Hawaiian Islands. **HFUU supports SB782.**

Taro, the traditional Hawaiian vegetable crop, is an integral part of Hawaiian cultural heritage and our agricultural industry. Currently, taro farmers are struggling due to environmental factors, such as drought and flooding, and economic stressors, such as low prices and competition from imported taro. SB782 Taro would provide some much-needed financial support for our hardworking taro farmers by appropriating funds to the department of agriculture to offer grants to Hawaii farming groups to be disbursed to taro farmers.

The funds created by this bill will help taro farmers increase their effectiveness and ensure their continued presence in Hawaii's agricultural industry and landscape. In addition, it can be used to support innovation and research to find ways to create further stability for our taro farmers.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Kaipo Kekona, President HFUU/HFUF

SB-782-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2023 9:10:04 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/29/2023 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Will Caron	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Small farms on 10 acres or less in Hawai‘i produce a significant portion of locally-grown and locally-consumed food on each island. The small farm sector of agriculture is growing, yet the 2017 census of agriculture reported that the average small-scale farmer in Hawai‘i made less than \$40,000 per year, with losses of almost \$10,000 annually due to the high costs of farming, including land and water. To accomplish the State's 2030 goal for local food production, there is an urgent need to better support small farmers, including through small economic incentives to build a larger market.

Taro is one of Hawai‘i's highest yielding staple starch food crops, producing 10,000 and 20,000 pounds per acre per annum under wet and dry cultivation, respectively. However, taro is severely underproduced in the state. The 2017 census of agriculture reported a total of 207 farms and 495 acres of taro in wetland and dryland production. An estimated 200–300 additional acres are unreported or in subsistence taro cultivation.

Taro plays a critical role in the health of families, particularly Native Hawaiians, yet the cost of poi renders the staple inaccessible to families most in need of this important starch food. Taro imports are estimated to soon exceed local production.

Lo‘i kalo, or wetland taro systems, are also critical to mitigating other impacts of climate change by functioning as riparian buffers and sediment retention basins. Underground foods, such as taro, can often survive hurricanes or flood events and can be harvested to address immediate food shortages where the capacity to store and cook food can be retained.

The state should do everything it can to encourage the cultivation of kalo and the production of poi and other taro products. Please support this bill.