

STAND. COM. REP. NO. 603

Honolulu, Hawaii
FEB 17, 2023

RE: H.B. No. 443
H.D. 1

Honorable Scott K. Saiki
Speaker, House of Representatives
Thirty-Second State Legislature
Regular Session of 2023
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems, to which was referred H.B. No. 443 entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO AGRICULTURE,"

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose of this measure is to require the Department of Agriculture to establish a Healthy Soils Program.

Your Committee received testimony in support of this measure from Hawai'i Farm Bureau; Kanalani Ohana Farm; Hawai'i Farmers Union United; 350Hawaii.org; Food+ Policy; Hawaii Cattlemen's Council, Inc.; Kuwale Ridge Farms; Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action; and ten individuals. Your Committee received comments on this measure from the Department of Agriculture and Department of the Attorney General.

Your Committee finds that soil health and sustainability are vital for agriculture in the State. This measure provides for a system of awards, financial incentives, and educational and technical assistance to small farmers, ranchers, and landowners to implement selected farm management practices that will improve soil health and build carbon stocks.

Your Committee has amended this measure by:

- (1) Clarifying the objectives of the Healthy Soils Program, which, as amended, are to:
 - (A) Create a Healthy Soil Assessment and Education Program;
 - (B) Provide farmers with education and technical assistance to implement farm management practices that contribute to healthy soils;
 - (C) Operate a Health Soil Grants Program;
 - (D) Administer existing financial incentives to implement farm management practices that contribute to healthy soils; and
 - (E) Establish other programs to accomplish the purposes of the Healthy Soils Program;
- (2) Further expanding on the Healthy Soil Assessment and Education Program and the Healthy Soil Grants Program of the Healthy Soils Program;
- (3) Specifying that the Department of Agriculture is to encourage collaboration among producers, land managers, landowners, and other agencies in the management of healthy soils;
- (4) Deleting language that established long-term goals of the Healthy Soils Program;
- (5) Clarifying the required content for the annual report by the Department of Agriculture to the Legislature; and
- (6) Changing the effective date to June 30, 3000, to encourage further discussion.

As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems that is attached to this report, your Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of H.B. No. 443, as amended herein, and recommends that it pass Second Reading in the form attached hereto as H.B. No. 443, H.D. 1, and be referred to your Committee on Finance.



Respectfully submitted on
behalf of the members of the
Committee on Agriculture & Food
Systems,



CEDRIC ASUEGA GATES, Chair



