



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## ‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

### Legislative Testimony

### Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the  
Senate Committee on Higher Education  
Tuesday, February 7, 2023 at 3:00 p.m.

By

Anna Wieczorek, Interim Dean  
College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources

And

Michael Bruno, Provost  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

#### SB 742 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Senate Committee on Higher Education:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 742 to establish a permanent educational support associate position within the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR) to provide support to the coffee and orchard crops extension and applied research program at the Kona Research Station.

The coffee industry is the third highest valued agricultural commodity of Hawai'i. Coffee is grown on 7,100 acres, has a farm gate value worth \$60,000,000 and green coffee value of about \$113,000,000. With the state's first detection of the Coffee Berry Borer in 2010, and with the arrival of Coffee Leaf Rust in 2020, this important crop faces serious threats to its existence. CTAHR Cooperative Extension, in partnership with the Pacific Basin Agricultural Research Center, Hawai'i Agriculture Research Center, Hawai'i Department of Agriculture, Synergistic Hawai'i Agriculture Council, and numerous coffee grower associations, has helped develop and share integrated pest management practices to the coffee growers of Hawai'i.

The estimated annual economic benefit to Hawai'i coffee growers because of the implementation of integrated pest management practices recommended by CTAHR Cooperative Extension is valued at \$33,000,000 per year.

In order to extend the reach of the one Extension agent in Hawai'i whose primary duties are focused on coffee and orchard crop production, this bill provides funding for one full-time equivalent permanent educational support position to assist the Extension agent working out of the Kona Research Station. This action would significantly amplify the positive effects of this Extension educational effort to support the Hawai'i coffee industry.

We support this bill, as it will have a significant positive economic impact for the coffee growers of Hawai'i provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in our BOR Approved Budget.



**LATE**

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February 7, 2023

HEARING BEFORE THE  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

**TESTIMONY ON SB 742**  
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Conference Room 229 & Videoconference  
3:00 PM

Aloha Chair Kim, Vice-Chair Kidani, 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 742**, which establishes an Educational Support Associate position within the University of Hawai'i College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources' (CTAHR) Kona cooperative extension.

The excellent work performed by CTAHR's cooperative extension service cannot be overstated. The ongoing outreach and education are unparalleled in the State. Farmers and ranchers rely on this program for their very success. CTAHR has helped develop and improve agricultural technologies pertinent to Hawai'i's farmers. This includes intensive cover crop research, promoting the importance of locally grown produce, developing biological and cultural methods for controlling pests without chemicals, and the use of biological nitrogen fixation to significantly increase the production of high protein foods while at the same time reducing the need for commercially produced fertilizers.

Coffee is one of Hawai'i's signature crops; one that helps bring fame and tourists to Hawai'i. Coffee Berry Borer (CBB) threatens the entire Hawaiian coffee industry. While the full tally is yet to be made, farms on Hawai'i Island have experienced deep losses. Some have failed. Moreover, large quantities of coffee have been downgraded due to insect damage, reducing the value of the remaining crop. CBB is a serious threat to Hawai'i's agriculture industry and the state's economy. While CBB is battled worldwide, no other coffee-growing origin shares Hawai'i's high labor costs and restrictions on pesticides that may be used elsewhere to fight this destructive pest. This places the industry at a competitive disadvantage when compared to the rest of the coffee-growing world.

Fighting CBB is a priority in other coffee-producing countries. The USDA has expressed its support targeted toward research, education, and mitigation. The industry's response has been immediate and multi-faceted. A non-profit CBB task force has been formed, including growers, processors, HDOA, UH, USDA, and county government. CTAHR and HDOA have been responsive and effective in their combined efforts. The industry has committed countless private-sector dollars and has leveraged both State and Federal funds.

A new threat, *Hemileia vasatrix* (coffee leaf rust), threatens the entire Hawai'ian coffee industry. Coffee Leaf Rust (CLR) is known to spread rapidly and leads to defoliation and tree death that can result in up to 70% loss of yield. CLR has already been identified on Hawai'i Island, Maui, and Oahu. CLR is the most destructive coffee disease in the world and can kill an entire farm in a matter of weeks. This fungus is a serious threat to Hawai'i's agriculture industry and the state's economy.

The addition of one full—time educational support associate position, within the University of Hawai'i college of tropical agriculture and human resources' coffee and orchard crops cooperative extension and applied research program will provide administrative, professional, and technical support to the CTAHR's cooperative extension program, Kona research station, and Hawai'i's highly valued agricultural industries that are challenged with economically damaging pest, disease, and production issues.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



PO Box 168, Kealahou, HI 96750

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

February 7, 2023

**RE: STRONG SUPPORT for SB742; RELATING AGRICULTURE**

Aloha Chair Mercado Kim, Vice Chair Kidani and members of the committee,

I am Chris Manfredi, Executive Director of Hawaii Coffee Association.

The Hawaii Coffee Association's (HCA) mission is to represent all sectors of the Hawaiian coffee industry. Our members are located throughout the State of Hawaii and positioned throughout the supply chain.

SB742 establishes a permanent educational support associate position within the University of Hawaii College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR) in Kona. The CTAHR Kona Extension office is of great value to Hawaii's coffee growers. The research and outreach that is performed in Kona is of vital benefit to growers located throughout the state. This position and related appropriation represents a modest investment in the future success of Hawaii's coffee industry.

Hawaii's coffee growers are currently in a battle for survival against devastating invasive pests and disease, most notably Coffee Berry Borer and Coffee Leaf Rust.

A report released on January 21, 2022 by USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) placed the value of Hawaii's green coffee crop at more than \$113,000,000 in the 2021-22 season. This figure ranks coffee among Hawaii's highest value crops, and does not account for upstream and downstream revenue in terms of value-added products and ancillary businesses. It's also important to note the coffee industry promotes tourism, and preserves open space, view planes and watersheds.

Coffee leaf rust (CLR) has been found on Hawaii Island, Kauai, Maui, Oahu and Lanai. CLR poses a devastating threat to Hawaii's coffee industry. CLR is known to spread rapidly and leads to defoliation and tree death. Coffee Berry Borer (CBB) remains a significant threat in all coffee producing regions. UHCTAHR's contributions to the response to these threats cannot be overstated.

Hawaii's coffee farmers have the highest cost of production anywhere, particularly with recent labor shortages and inflationary pressures. The cost to manage these compound threat layers caused by invasive species and economic forces are squeezing Hawaii's farmers more than ever before. Yet we still compete in a global market with our counterparts across the globe who do not share many of our high costs. Many of the coffee-producing countries with whom we compete have much higher research budgets than we have in Hawaii.

We respectfully ask the legislature establish this position and adequately fund it. Please consider it a wise investment in one of Hawaii's most important agricultural crops. Your support is vitally important to Hawaii's coffee growers and the many families and businesses that depend on our industry.

**We respectfully ask you to pass SB742.**

Please accept our thanks on behalf of Hawaii's hard working coffee producers.

**SB-742**

Submitted on: 2/6/2023 7:51:29 AM

Testimony for HRE on 2/7/2023 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Nathan Trump	Testifying for Island Harvest	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing on behalf of Island Harvest in full support of SB742 to establish a permanent staff position for CTAHR's Kona cooperative extension.

Island Harvest is a farming company in Kapaau, HI and grows macadamia nuts, ulu, and limes. We are committed to taking care of our community by providing quality work, caring for the land, and contributing positively to the community.

Hawaii island does not have adequate extension staff to meet the needs of the hundreds, if not thousands, of coffee and orchard crop growers. The past few years, Andrea Kawabata, CTAHR's Kona based extension agent for coffee and orchard crops, has borne the burden of supporting coffee, macadamia nuts, and a number of other important orchard crops. While she has been performing spectacularly well to attempt to serve the needs of growers, the team at CTAHR's Kona cooperative extension is too small to meet the extension needs of so many agricultural industries.

SB 742 provides key support for Hawaii island's farmers by providing staffing for one of the most important cooperative extension locations in the state.

We appreciate you taking the time to consider my testimony.

Mahalo,

Nathan Trump

General Manager

Island Harvest Inc.



**IN SUPPORT OF SB741**  
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

University of Hawai'i College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources; Educational Support Associate; Appropriation (\$)

Aloha Chair, and Esteemed Committee Members,

The Kona Coffee Farmers Association stands in strong support of SB741. The KCFA represent over 170 farms and agribusinesses in the Kona districts and our mission is to protect the economic interests of our growers.

**Our current single Extension staff is not adequate when considering the \$130 million valuation of the crops they cover.** Coffee, macadamias and orchard crops could all sustain their own Extension agent, yet all crops are combined into one staff position. Additional staff are desperately needed so that growers can maintain access to vital information. A Support Associate will greatly benefit growers and their crop's health.

Thank you for considering this bill. Your attention makes a difference in the lives of hundreds of farmers.

Mahalo nui loa!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Suzanne Shriner". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Suzanne Shriner  
President

**SB-742**

Submitted on: 2/4/2023 9:21:29 AM

Testimony for HRE on 2/7/2023 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Carolyn Witcover	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support the addition of personnel at the station because Education of our farmers is very important to success. The staff currently staffing the station covers a wide area geographically and crop wise and more help and access is needed. Thank you.



**REBECCA VILLEGAS**

*Council Member  
District 7, Central Kona*



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## HAWAI'I COUNTY COUNCIL

*County of Hawai'i  
West Hawai'i Civic Center, Bldg. A  
74-5044 Ane Keohokalole Hwy.  
Kailua-Kona, Hawai'i 96740*

TESTIMONY OF REBECCA VILLEGAS COUNCIL MEMBER,  
HAWAI'I COUNTY COUNCIL  
ON SB 742, RELATING TO AGRICULTURE  
Committee on Agriculture and Environment  
February 7, 2023

Chairperson Gabbard and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 742. My testimony is submitted in my individual capacity as a member of the Hawai'i County Council.

Invasive species are a primary threat to Hawai'i's agriculture and economy. The coffee berry borer is a significant coffee pest in Hawai'i and the world. Coffee leaf rust causes severe defoliation that greatly reduces the photosynthetic capacity of the coffee plants. Long-term effects of coffee leaf rust may include dieback, which has a significant impact on the following year's yield and causes an estimated thirty per cent to eighty per cent loss if not properly treated. Efforts to control coffee leaf rust are critical to sustaining the coffee industry.

This bill extends the pesticide subsidy program to June 30, 2025, and extends the position of the pesticide subsidy manager to June 30, 2026. The extension of the subsidy will allow the Department to control the coffee berry borer and the coffee leaf rust to mitigate the damage these organisms cause to the coffee beans and plants.

For these reasons stated above, I urge the Committee on Agriculture and Environment to support this measure. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at, (808) 323-4267

Mahalo for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rebecca Villegas'.

Rebecca Villegas  
Council Member, Hawai'i County Council