

STAND. COM. REP. NO.

1268

Honolulu, Hawaii

MAR 17 , 2023

RE: S.B. No. 1498  
S.D. 1  
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 S.B. No. 1498, S.D. 1, entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO THE PROTECTION OF TARO,"

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose of this measure is to improve protections for wetland taro lands and ancient wetland agricultural structures on undeveloped state-owned or -acquired lands.

Your Committee received testimony in support of this measure from the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, Chamber of Sustainable Commerce, Ko'olau Foundation, Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action, Hawai'i Farmers Union United, Hawai'i Food+ Policy, 'Ai Pchaku, and fourteen individuals.

Your Committee finds that there is a compelling state interest in conserving state agricultural lands. Your Committee further finds that Act 22, Session Laws of Hawaii 2008, as amended by Act 196, Session Laws of Hawaii 2010, established a Taro Security and Purity Task Force (Task Force). As part of its duties, the Task Force was responsible for developing guidelines, protocols, and recommendations for taro policy. In 2009, the Task Force recommended improved protections for taro growing lands, including loi (wet fields and terraces), mala (dry fields and

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terraces), kuana or paepae pohaku (stone walls), and auwai (irrigation ditches). The Task Force also found that these key structural elements for viable wetland taro production were being destroyed, severed, and built upon by private and public development due to gaps in land use, historic preservation, and planning laws and policies. This measure seeks to fill in those gaps to support taro farmers and ensure the continued cultivation of taro in Hawaii.

Your Committee has amended this measure by:

- (1) Changing the effective date to June 30, 3000, to encourage further discussion; and
- (2) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity, consistency, and style.

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 S.B. No. 1498, S.D. 1, as amended herein, and recommends that it pass Second Reading in the form attached hereto as S.B. No. 1498, S.D. 1, H.D. 1, and be referred to your Committee on Water & Land.

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



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CEDRIC ASUEGA GATES, Chair



