

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

SYLVIA LUKE
Lt. Governor



SHARON HURD
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

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State of Hawai'i
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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**TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

**BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT
AND JUDICIARY**

**FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2024
1:15 PM
CONFERENCE ROOM 224**

**SENATE BILL NO. 2447
RELATING TO THE BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

Chairs Gabbard and Rhoads, Vice Chairs and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 2447. This bill adds the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) to the Board of Agriculture (BOA). The Department of Agriculture (Department) has comments.

The Department concurs that the interests and aspirations of Native Hawaiian farmers be represented on the BOA and comments that the interests and aspirations of farmers, ranchers, aquaculturists and horticulturalists of many ethnicities are represented on the BOA. The current BOA includes two at-large members and an ex-officio member that are Native Hawaiian and along with other members, they are dedicated to the preservation and productive use of agricultural resources to assure a healthy and adequate food supply for the people of Hawai'i, providing employment, maintaining a favorable balance of trade, and preserving the aesthetic quality of the islands, The BOA acknowledges Article XI, Section 3 of the Hawaii State Constitution



to “conserve and protect agricultural lands, promote diversified agriculture, increase agricultural self-sufficiency and assure the availability of agriculturally suitable lands.”

The Department encourages a partnership between OHA and BOA to work together to enhance, for example, the grant and loan programs OHA offers and would welcome a conversation with OHA staff on how this can be accomplished. To address the unintended obstacles created by Act 90 with potential to narrow the focus of income-generating activities in relation to OHA’s pro-rata share of the proceeds and income from public land trust, these concerns could be brought to the BOA through submittals for discussion.

Commenting on language on page 2, lines 10 – 17 concerning the full transfer of OHA’s annual pro rata share of income and proceeds from the public land trust, this concern may be resolved by the 2024 report prepared pursuant to Section 5 of Act 178, SLH 2006, which calls for the Department of Land and Natural Resources to provide an accounting of all receipts from lands described in Section 5(f) of the Admission Act, for the prior FY. Page 5 of the report summarizes the funds transferred by the DOA to OHA in FY23 as \$405,898.38. While this figure does not address the income-generating activities, it can be reviewed, and findings could be brought to the BOA as a submittal. Link to the report is provided.

<https://files.hawaii.gov/dlnr/reports-to-the-legislature/2024/LD24-Ceded-Lands-Receipt-Rpt-FY23.pdf>

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



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Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment
Senate Committee on Judiciary

February 23, 2024

1:15 p.m.

Conference Room 224

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **STRONGLY SUPPORTS SB2447**, which adds the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs to the Board of Agriculture as an ex-officio member.

The Board of Agriculture oversees the Department of Agriculture, which is dedicated to the preservation and productive use of agriculture and aquaculture resources to assure a healthy and adequate food supply for Hawai'i's people, providing employment, maintaining a favorable balance of trade and preserving the aesthetic quality of the islands. The Board provides policy direction and oversight of the department, which includes the granting of leases to agriculture and aquaculture producers in both land and water.

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs is the principal state agency responsible for the betterment of conditions for the Native Hawaiian people. OHA carries out its mission in various ways. One of the foundational ways in which we accomplish our mission is by protecting and advocating for former crown and government lands, also known as ceded lands or public land trust lands. In addition to being stewards of legacy lands and ensuring government agencies honor their obligations to the 'āina, OHA also understands the ways former crown and government lands generate revenue as we receive a pro rata share of those revenues. **We believe that because OHA is a beneficiary of revenues from state land leases of ceded lands, we should be involved in lease discussions as a Board of Agriculture member.**

Additionally, as part of our mission of bettering conditions for Native Hawaiians, OHA has developed a 15-year strategic plan called Mana i Maui Ola. This plan has four strategic directions: educational pathways, health outcomes, quality housing and economic stability. Ensuring Hawai'i has a strong, sustainable agriculture and aquaculture sectors literally and figuratively supports all four of the directions. In particular, both the



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health outcomes and economic stability directions include outcomes that directly relate to the agriculture and aquaculture sectors. In health outcomes, we are working to increase restoration of Native Hawaiian cultural sites, landscapes, kulāiwi and food systems. In economic stability, we aim to establish new markets for Native Hawaiian products (e.g. kalo, loko i‘a grown fish) that can provide Native Hawaiian producers a livable wage. OHA is concentrating its efforts to effect changes in these outcomes and across all directions. We know that having strong, local food systems, ensuring sustainable land stewardship and cultivating Native Hawaiians’ connection to the ‘āina and water is vital to the success of each of the directions.

Given the directions of our strategic plan and our strong foundations as protectors of land and Native Hawaiian customs and practices—which include mahi‘ai or farming—**OHA has a vested interest in participating in the Board of Agriculture and helping to set a vision for a thriving agriculture and aquaculture future here in our homeland.**

OHA also believes **we will bring unique value to the Board of Agriculture.** As the Board and Department of Agriculture oversee leases of agricultural lands, OHA will be able to bring the lens of the ways in which revenues from land, whether from rent or otherwise, can impact the state and especially Native Hawaiians. We also bring expertise in ensuring government agencies can adequately fulfill their obligations to land, water and historical and cultural sites. Additionally, OHA will help bring to the table the unique perspectives of Hawaiian agriculture and aquaculture producers, cultivators and stewards. Our agency regularly works with and supports mahi‘ai and other producers and stewards. The State Legislature need look no further than our recently launched Mahi ‘Ai Loan Program or our Ola Ka ‘Āina grants to see our direct investment and interest in the agriculture and aquaculture sectors.

OHA appreciates the opportunity to testify on this measure and share why we believe our Board Chair should become an ex-officio member of the Board of Agriculture. **We urge these committees to advance SB2447.**

SB-2447

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 7:55:27 AM

Testimony for AEN on 2/23/2024 1:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Keoni Shizuma	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the committee,

I stand in strong support of SB2447.

Native Hawaiians and Native Hawaiian culture has long been intertwined with agriculture. The relationships between Native Hawaiians and the ‘āina (land) is well documented as a key component and pillar of Native Hawaiian health. Arguably, agriculture could be considered the main focus of traditional Native Hawaiian lifestyle and culture, especially considering that there were no refrigerators, highly processed shelf-stable foods, or regularly imported food, yet the native people of these islands thrived here for thousands of years. In traditional Native Hawaiian culture, the relationship between man, land, and the food that was produced, brought about scientific observations that are more advanced than the scientific observations of today, which is one of the reasons why our natural resources (water, air, and soil) were abundant when missionaries and foreign colonizers arrived.

We need only look at the famed “Malu ulu o Lele,” which due to the wildfires in Lahaina last year, has shined light on the fact that Lahaina was “the Venice of the Pacific” in the past, yet has become more recently associated with drought.

Including Native Hawaiian perspective within the Board of Agriculture is long overdue and a welcomed change. The saying, “what’s good for Native Hawaiians is good for Hawaii” applies well here, as Native Hawaiians and Native Hawaiian culture are model examples that bring about ‘ike (knowledge) that will guide us back to a Hawaii where our resources thrive, and thus, we will thrive.

Let Native Hawaiian culture guide us in many facets of life, as it has proven to create a thriving, interconnected, family-oriented, and resource-rich society and environment, in which the people of these island will be able to thrive in harmony and alongside a thriving ‘āina.

Mahalo nui loa for your time and consideration.

Keoni Shizuma

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Submitted on: 2/21/2024 10:31:17 AM

Testimony for AEN on 2/23/2024 1:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jacqueline S. Ambrose	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I support adding the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs to the Board of Agriculture. Hawaiians must be involved/informed regarding decisions.pertaining to agriculture, especially native Hawaiian farming practises..