

ACT 304

S.B. NO. 3197

A Bill for an Act Relating to Agriculture.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Hawaii:

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that it is necessary to support beginning farmers in the State. The legislature believes that a farmer apprentice mentoring program could increase farming in the State, ensure the continued use of well developed farming methods, and provide for the cultivation of new farming methods.

The legislature acknowledges that new and aspiring farmers face a myriad of challenges, including acquiring adequate production and business knowledge and skills and accessing the tools necessary to evaluate their resources and develop feasible farming and business plans. However, the State lacks qualified farming method teachers and funding for beginning farmer training. Further, although the United States Department of Agriculture provides funding for beginning farmers, this funding is limited and unreliable.

The legislature believes that the future of the State's farming industry, food supply, and agriculture is reliant upon increasing and diversifying the number of new farmers in the State; introducing regenerative farming methods into the State; enhancing the long-term viability of farm businesses; utilizing and building upon existing beginning farmer training methods; providing opportunities for potential farmers who are socially or financially disadvantaged; and increasing support for beginning farmers who already own or manage a farm, and have farmed for five years or less.

Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to establish the farmer apprentice mentoring program, to be administered by the department of agriculture.

SECTION 2. Chapter 141, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by adding a new section to part I to be appropriately designated and to read as follows:

“§141- Farmer apprentice mentoring program; established. (a) There is established the farmer apprentice mentoring program, to be administered by the department of agriculture to support former mentors in training apprentices.

(b) Subject to the availability of funding, the department of agriculture may enter into contracts with qualified farmer mentorship providers on a first-come, first-served basis, and in accordance with section 103D-304, to effectuate the purposes of this section.

(c) A qualified farmer mentorship provider that provides services pursuant to this section shall make available for inspection and examination by the department of agriculture during regular business hours all relevant training and mentoring materials, sites, and facilities.

(d) The department of agriculture shall submit a report to the legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of each regular session. The report shall include, at a minimum:

- (1) The number of farmer apprentices enrolled in the farmer apprentice mentoring program during the preceding year;
- (2) A listing of each qualified farmer mentorship provider;
- (3) An assessment of the ability of farmer mentorship providers participating in the program to complete any program objectives and work tasks identified by the department of agriculture; and
- (4) An evaluation of the results achieved by the program, to be written, to the extent possible, in measurable and quantifiable terms.”

SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$300,000 or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2022-2023 to establish and implement the farmer apprentice mentoring program pursuant to section 2 of this Act to provide mentoring to farmer apprentices on a whole farm system approach to agriculture.

The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of agriculture for the purposes of this Act.

SECTION 4. New statutory material is underscored.¹

SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2022.

(Approved July 12, 2022.)

Note

1. Edited pursuant to HRS §23G-16.5.