

March 13, 2023

Rep. Cedric Asuega Gates, Chair
Rep. Kirstin Kahaloa, Vice Chair
Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems
Wednesday, March 15, 2023
9:30 am
Via Videoconference



RE: **SB1498 SD1** Relating to the Protection of Taro (**Support with Amendment**)

Dear Chair Gates, Vice Chair Kahaloa & Committee Members,

The Chamber of Sustainable Commerce (CSC) testifies in strong support of SB1498 SD1, which prohibits the Board of Land and Natural Resources from disturbing or acquiring for development certain wetland taro growing lands, establishes a taro lands classification for public lands, permits structures for loi taro fields in the agricultural district, establishes growth and perpetuation of traditional Hawaiian crops as a goal of the Hawai'i State Planning Act, and authorizes the Land Use Commission to create an inventory of taro lands and consult with former members of the Taro Security and Purity Task Force in the creation of the inventory.

As business owners who believe we can strengthen our economy without hurting workers, consumers, or the environment, we urge this committee to pass SB1498 SD1 because it protects taro farmers, consumers and the environment from development that may negatively impact supplies of taro based foods and cultural preservation that relies on access to this fresh food source.

We hope this committee considers replacing the last "and" with "or" in the section below to ensure the bill has a broader application and offers greater protections for taro growing waters and lands: "The board shall not disturb existing ancient taro-growing systems, ancient wetland taro lands, or structural elements of ancient wetland taro-growing systems on undeveloped lands used for wetland taro cultivation before statehood and or currently in use for wetland taro cultivation."

Passing this bill with the amendment above would bring Hawaii closer to fulfilling its own constitutional mandate to conserve and protect land and water and ensure these resources are used in a manner consistent with their conservation and in furtherance of self-sufficiency.

The Constitution of the State of Hawaii

Article XI

CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF RESOURCES

Section 1. For the benefit of present and future generations, the State and its political subdivisions **shall conserve and protect Hawaii's natural beauty and all natural resources, including land, water,** air, minerals and energy sources, and shall promote the development and **utilization of these resources in a manner consistent with their conservation and in furtherance of the self-sufficiency of the State.** (Emphasis added.)

Hawaii Legislative Council	Maile Meyer Na Mea Hawaii Honolulu	Russel Rudderman Island Naturals Hilo / Kona	Tina Wildberger Kihei Ice Maui	Joell Edwards Wainiha Country Market Kauai	Kim Coco Iwamoto AQuA Rentals, LLC Honolulu
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