



# MAUI COUNTY FARM BUREAU

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## **Testimony on Bill 83, Bill 79, and Bill 104**

Aloha Chair Johnson and Members of the Committee:

I am Warren Watanabe, executive director of the Maui County Farm Bureau. MCFB on behalf of our farm and ranch families and organizations strongly supports Bill 83, Bill 79, and Bill 104.

MCFB appreciates Maui County's continued support of agricultural production, especially relating to water rates. A meeting of the Maui Drought Committee was held on Tuesday and we were provided with a dismal outlook, meaning that our farmers and ranchers viability will again be challenged. During these times of difficulty, investments in crops and livestock are often lost and savings used to support families as income flows are severely reduced. During these times every expense item hurts so management of costs is important. The proposed Bill 83 providing ag rates beginning at the first gallon for meters solely used for agriculture is a good example of proactive assistance and MCFB strongly supports this measure.

Bill 79 increases the grace period to 180 days is also of assistance for longer term, slower growing crops and perennial crops such as flowers. Perennial crops are slower growing and mortality during droughts may take years for recovery. Efforts to keep these crops alive is important. Many of these crops will be encouraged for climate smart plantings. We need to provide ways to maximize their success.

Our farmers have invested in drip irrigation and other measures to manage water use. Isolated sprinkler applications may occur but they are often tied into management of other issues such as pests that increase under hot conditions. MCFB is committed to working with SWCD and NRCS to increase adoption of measures to increase use of soil moisture storage and other technologies for drought mitigation. During these times of climate change it is critical to identify solutions to provide for continued production with less water.

Along with these measures, MCFB is very supportive of other actions by the Water Department to mitigate droughts. Decisions that impact drought requires options to provide water resources. The state provides a tax credit for water storage structures. A County match may be an idea to take advantage of water adequate time periods to increase water access on farms and ranches stored during times of abundant water.

Federal cost sharing is also available for such options so encouragement of such facilities may be of help. Storms are expected to be of increased severity. We need to identify ways to see them as a source of water and how they can be managed for drought periods.

MCFB appreciates this opportunity to provide our opinion on this important matter and is available for continued dialogue as needed. Thank you.