

Great Committee

From: County Clerk
Sent: Wednesday, February 22, 2023 1:05 PM
To: Great Committee
Subject: FW: Written Testimony Supporting Ms Rogerene Arce to Director of COM DOA
Attachments: 2023 Reappointment Rogerene Arce Director Dept of Ag Council Testamony.docx

From: Alton Arakaki <altonarakaki@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 22, 2023 10:51 AM
To: County Clerk <County.Clerk@mauicounty.us>
Subject: Written Testimony Supporting Ms Rogerene Arce to Director of COM DOA

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Attached please find my written testimony in support on Mrs Rogerene Kali Arce to the appointed position of County of Maui, Director of the Department of Agriculture

February 22, 2023

Testimony Supporting Approval of Rogerene Kali Arce Appointment

Appointment Position: Director of Agriculture, Department of Agriculture, Maui County

My name is Mr. Alton S. Arakaki, a retired County Extension Agent for the Cooperative Extension Service, College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources, CTAHR, in the University of Hawaii, Manoa. I served in this position during the period of agriculture transition from pineapple plantation to what we call today a diversified agriculture industry. I retired in December 2018 after serving in this position on Moloka'i for 36 years. I am providing this testimony in support of Rogerene "Kali" Arce's appointment for the Director of the Maui County Department of Agriculture. I've known Rogerene Arce, "Kali", for more than quarter of a century.

Today you the Maui County Council is about to sharing similar iconic moments with me. About 29 years ago, in 1993, my colleague, Glenn Teves and I were faced with similar decision on whether or not we should select Rogerene "Kali" Arce, a newly college graduate at the time, to fill a vacant Agriculture Extension Agent position in our Cooperative Extension Service office on Moloka'i. Our concern was whether we were being fair to Kali's professional career to be the first FEMALE AGRICULTURE Extension Agent in University of Hawaii's, at that time 86-year Land Grant history and to be swept into a heavily male dominated agriculture extension agent profession and would be required to work directly with a male dominant farming community. Yes, there were female Extension Agents, but they were all in the Human Resource profession, so Kali would be the first. In the end of we decided that she had the academic background, core values, personal character and strong supportive attitude toward the role of agriculture to the sustainability of Hawaii and towards the farmers in the industry. We selected her for the position. We also decided to provide Kali with all the guidance to help her navigate through the profession and farm production community. And finally, we decided to give her all the rope she wanted to take to develop her own extension program that would successfully address the needs of her Hawaiian Homestead farmer clientele. And indeed, she took all the rope given to her and excelled.

Today you too will be embarking into iconic moments. It is an iconic moment that the people of Maui County have given birth to a new Agriculture Department, the first in all Hawaii's County governments. And now you are about to engage another iconic moment in deciding whether Kali is to be reappointed to serve as our first Director for the Agriculture Department. What better way than to approve the reappoint of Kali that will bring six months experience in this position and 30 years of excellent experience gained from working in both public and private agriculture institutions to start the new County of Maui, Department of Agriculture. What better way than to give the Department of Agriculture a good start with a female leader that have nurturing leadership style but a "imua", "lets move forward" expectation of herself and every team member around her.

In 1993 she started her agriculture career with a public institution, CTAHR, Cooperative Extension Service. She was hired as an Extension Agent to provide agricultural education for Native Hawaiian Homestead farmers on Moloka'i in all agriculture commodities. A tough job. I won't discuss her accomplishments with the Cooperative Extension Service, something you will find and read in her resume. Instead, I would like to provide you with my experience in the reaction from the Hawaiian Homestead farmers and community she worked with for 17 years when she decided to leave the UH, Cooperative Extension Service, in 2010. Like you, you can measure your success in your work by the response you receive from you constituents. Extension Agents can also measure the degrees of success of their program by keeping close contact with their clientele and receiving feedback from them. When she announced her resignation from her Extension Agent position the reaction from the homestead farmers, teachers, government agriculture agencies and non-profit organizations were all of concerns, regrets and at lost of 17 years of professional agriculture relationship they developed with her. Farmers expressed concerns about losing the agriculture production educational program she developed and the many tailor-made projects she conducted with them on their homestead farms. Teachers expressed regrets that the school will be losing their support for their gardening projects and Kali's youth value-add entrepreneurial project call "Radish Patch Kids", government agencies, most were off-Moloka'i, express regrets and lost of Kali that provided them with contacts and broad professional understanding of the Hawaiian Homestead agriculture community on Molokai. She was well-liked and respected by her homestead farmer clientele. Her professional relationship she developed with her farmers was an indication of her skills in developing, managing, acquiring resources for her educational programs that were meaningful, applicable and met the needs of her farmers. Any concerns about her being a female in a male dominant profession and agriculture production industry never came up.

More than 1500 years ago the first group of Polynesians set foot in Hawaii. Their voyages weren't just to satisfy their exploratory curiosity, but rather to find new lands to settle and establish a civilization. To satisfy their nutritional and survival needs the carried on their voyaging canoe were propagation material for 24 different plants and pigs, chickens and dogs. The fastest maturing food plant in the group was sweet potato, which under good growing conditions today would take 90 to 120 days to mature. Original settlers would have to plan for this. It is believed that ancient Hawaiians consumed 7-9 pounds of taro or carbohydrate plants per day. That means at peak population on the Hawaiian Islands, they harvested 5.6 to 9 million pounds of taro every day, and produced everything for their food, shelter, clothing and medicinal needs. By the time Captain James Cook arrived on the Islands in 1778, and during the period of the American Revolutionary War with the British, native Hawaiian existing independently in Hawaii for 1200 years, with a well established and sustainable civilization and a population that would almost rival what we have today. Somewhere in the 1200 year of independent existence in Hawaii, ancient Hawaiians were so confident in their sustainable food production and survival system that they found it was not necessary to hold on to the knowledge of long open ocean navigation and voyaging skills that brought them to Hawaii in the first place. That skill and knowledge was lost. Not until 1976 did we re-learned ancient Hawaiian open ocean navigational skills through Hokulea voyages. The challenges we face today, is can we duplicate what the ancient Hawaiians accomplished in sustaining a civilization in Hawaii for the next 1000 years? Will we ever be able to give up necessities of depending on open ocean voyaging to deliver our food, shelter, clothing and medicinal to sustain our lifestyle in paradise in the middle of the

Pacific? While we take great pride in our new discoveries and advancement in the sciences and technologies that have contributed to extending our life span and comfort, I would say we would be hard pressed to duplicate what the original settler of our islands accomplished in sustaining a civilization for the next 1000 years by ourselves. But I feel we have no choice but to try. In fact, we are moving closer to Japan on our tectonic ride than we are toward the mainland where get greater majority of our goods to sustain our lifestyle in Hawaii. During the corona virus pandemic, the United States found that it was a national security risk to outsource the production of goods that are necessary to sustain a healthy nation and now initiating big changes in our supply manufacturing chain in our Made in America campaign. We in Hawaii should be well aware of our situation in the middle of the Pacific and feel a sense of great vulnerability in our security.

Maui County has started to meet the challenges ahead of us by creating close to home the Agriculture Department. Your next step is to reappoint Rogerene Kali Arce, a native Hawaiian, a Kamehameha High School graduate, a Hawaiian Homesteader on Moloka'i, who has the academic background in sustainable agriculture and will bring to the Department 29 years of agriculture experience from working in both public and private agricultural institutions. She is someone that understands the value of agriculture and role it plays in sustaining health island communities and its importance towards the diversification our overall economy that today heavily dependent on service-based industries. For these reasons I support the appointment of Rogerene Kali Arce to become the first Director of Agriculture in the County of Maui.

Thank you for allowing me to provide you my supportive testimony on behave of Rogerene Kali Arce in her appointment as Director for the County of Maui, Agriculture Department.

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