

GET Committee

From: faith@farmersvoicehawaii.com
Sent: Wednesday, June 24, 2020 11:54 AM
To: GET Committee
Cc: Shane M. Sinenci
Subject: GET Testimony 6/23/20 from Faith Chase
Attachments: GET Testimony 62320 Faith Chase.pdf

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FARMERS VOICE HAWAII

Faith Chase
faith@farmersvoicehawaii.com

June 23, 2020

RE: GET 10-(4), GET 10-(15)

Aloha Chair Molina and Committee Members,
GET.committee@mauicounty.gov

GET 10-(4): I am in support of changing the Department of Housing and Human Concerns to Department of Housing and establishing a Department of Human Concerns. While issues within this departments purview have not always been in my direct purview, I have witnessed immense lack of regard on important subject areas during this COVID alarm.

I am not certain where the responsibilities lay but I know for certain that the department in how it exists now is absent of critical expansive community outreach. Outreach is the premise in which all wise decisions can be made. The lack of data produced and participation in following up with the non government agencies this department works with is an alarming vacancy. There is also a concern with allocating monies to faith -based organizations and unrealistic reliance therein.

I understand that the discussion after the GET Committee today included the concerns of bifurcating the department. I heard a portion of Alice Lee speaking from experience that the department in fact is already somewhat geographically divided. Without insult I would like to express that Maui has so much work to complete in regards to creating realistic housing models and solutions that the division of work might be a welcomed relief.

GET 10-(15): I am strong support of a Maui Department of Agriculture. One notable point that might resonate with council members is that the National Association of Counties has 2396 county members and huge majority of these counties have respective Departments of Agriculture. It has been

reported by council members who attended NACo meetings that when the information was shared that Maui did in fact not have a Dept. of Ag, it raised some eyebrows from fellow NACo members.

With respect to agriculture and water, a Department of Agriculture would be a much needed conduit for this complex conversation on water supply. Ideally a local County department of this kind will have an area that focuses on water needs, delivery and costs, if any, involved. I represent 30 members of my kalo farming family and it is important to our East Maui interests that the Maui County Department of Water Supply, Commission on Water Resources and Maui Board of Water have this liaison of a Maui Department of Agriculture to assist in serious and impactful water needs conversations.

With respect to the questions raised regarding how the existing work of the State run Ag Dept. would differ from a Maui County Department of Ag. I have strong testimony to the failures of the Board of Agriculture taking our concerns to the State Department of Ag. During my time as a board member of Hawai'i Organic Farming Association (HOFA) we were asked to provide input on the issue of Little Fire Ants. At the time there were several HOFA board members from the island of Hawai'i and they took the LFA issue very seriously because of it's extensive stronghold of the island. HOFA heard from three significant farms that suffered so much with LFA that they ultimately had to fold their operations. The organization actually gifted one of these family farms with much needed monetary support.

When Maui had identified it's first LFA occurrence, HOFA made request to the Maui Board of Ag representative to get LFA on the state agenda. Constant communication both oral and emails were made and exhaustive examples of emergency declarations were shared, such as Texas and issue with mosquitos after their flood. It took one year to get the item on the agenda. Without being negative, I must impress that we are in a real situation with LFA on Maui and it would been improved had our voice been heard and action been taken in a reasonable amount of time. The existing framework of State run Dept. of Ag has major pukas.

In closing, I might add that Farmers Voice Hawai'i, my corner of supporting Hawai'i agriculture, hosted a conversation regarding this resolution to create a Maui Department of Agriculture. This was conducted to provide a non-bias floor to discuss any concerns. One point that was made was that for over a hundred years the State has had the thinking that HC&S and Maui Land & Pine were generally "taking care of ag" on Maui island. While they did employ a significant amount of agriculturally related workers that is not the case today. It is a new day and these entities are no longer.

Mahalo for listening to my testimony,

Faith Chase

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