

GET Committee

From: County Clerk
Sent: Tuesday, June 30, 2020 7:46 AM
To: GET Committee
Subject: FW: Simon Russell DBA Farm Maui LLC Supports GET 10(15)

From: simon@farm-maui.com <simon@farm-maui.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 30, 2020 4:57 AM
To: County Clerk <County.Clerk@mauicounty.us>
Cc: Alice L. Lee <Alice.Lee@mauicounty.us>; Mike J. Molina <Mike.Molina@mauicounty.us>; Keani N. Rawlins <Keani.Rawlins@mauicounty.us>
Subject: Simon Russell DBA Farm Maui LLC Supports GET 10(15)

Aloha Kakahiaka Chair Molina, Vice Chair Rawlins-Fernandez and Honorable Members of the Committee,

This is a letter in strong support of a Maui County Department of Agriculture to give a strong voice to our producers, and ensure a vibrant and prosperous agriculture future for the County of Maui.

It is important to make sure that there is flexibility built into the language of the Charter Amendment, so I humbly request that you ensure that the entirety of Maui County's agriculture community has the ability to impact the makeup of this new department in its rules making process.

With all of the economic uncertainty on the horizon, it is time to invest in economic diversity, and this new department will be a big step in ensuring our Maui County producers will be able to grow our food, fuel and fiber into the future.

Mahalo for your tireless service and support of this new department,

Me ka ha 'aha'a

Simon Russell



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Hui 'O Mālama 'Āina

Licensed and Insured
C-36470

"You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete"
-Buckminster Fuller



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GET Committee

From: Jennifer Karaca <karacajy@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 30, 2020 8:13 AM
To: GET Committee
Subject: GET-10(15) testimony MCFB responses
Attachments: MCFB testimony response.pdf

Please disregard the previous email, it was sent from the wrong email address. Please use this one to submit on to the record instead.



Aloha GET Committee,

Thank you for hearing the proposed charter amendment to create a Maui County Department of Agriculture. I understand that Maui County Farm Bureau expressed some concerns about the resolution and also seemed to be unclear of the intent, so I took the time to thoroughly address their comments and concerns, and I am providing you with the responses as well in case any of you may have the same concerns.

In addition, there will be a revised resolution presented with suggestions included from the Agricultural Working Group, to the extent we felt that we could get buy in from the rest of the groups and farmers that were consulted during this process. We hope this amended version will be a good middle ground so that we can move forward with this exciting endeavour to help our community and create the change needed to help Maui County thrive.

Mahalo,

Jennifer Karaca
karacajy@gmail.com
(509)851-8300

Comment Intro: We are testifying today to urge you to defer this well-intentioned but unvetted proposal for the establishment of a County Department of Agriculture. Our board of directors certainly agrees with the need to support island farmers, but requests the proposal to be deferred until the public, the stakeholders, and agriculture advocacy groups have the opportunity to review and give it the consideration it deserves. We respectfully submit the following reasons for it to be deferred.

Response Intro: While we can appreciate this opinion, it is an opinion and unfortunately it assumes that this was not a public process, which is not the truth. If you look through the testimony that was submitted, which would be a good way to hear some of the community feedback. You will see that organizations like Maui Tomorrow, HEAL, HFUU, AWG, along with individual farmers, ranchers, nonprofits, and advocates in the agricultural education and market sectors, along with residents not involved in the ag sector but affected by it, have all testified in support. We had over 130 testimonies submitted in support and less than 5 in opposition. We also received testimony in support at the EACP meeting the previous week that discussed food security and people were already signing up to testify in support of the Department of Agriculture Charter Amendment, and it wasn't even formally on that agenda, although in the food security discussions, the need for a need for a department was discussed. This was also a publicly publicized meeting, that was discussing food security, that the MCFB was absent from, while other organizations, farmers and residents found the time to be present.

While we can agree it may have been a faster process than some would like but we are in very dire circumstances and change needs to happen as soon as possible, or our community is really going to suffer. We are already experiencing extreme economic hardships and a breakdown of the global food supply, which is only going to get worse with the effects of climate change, that will continue to impact our delicate socioeconomic systems.

Comment 1. MAUI'S PRODUCTION FARMERS AND RANCHERS WOULD LIKE TO PARTICIPATE TO HELP THE COUNTY HELP AGRICULTURE

Sadly, this proposal was developed without participation by MCFB, the oldest, largest, general agriculture organization on Maui. There were no meetings, no solicitation for input, and no collaboration with our non-profit organization which represents the majority of production farming in Maui County. Unfortunately, a lack of collaboration and transparency can lead to uninformed decision-making. We would be pleased to work with the Council to identify practical solutions to the many barriers to successful farming identified in this measure.

Response 1: We agree it is unfortunate that MCFB has not participated in this discussion. They were contacted via the contact information on their website and we received no response. They were also included in email lists, that some of the organizations that support this initiative sent out, with information regarding the initiative. There has been discussion in various groups across the island discussing how to address the issues in our food system and MFB was absent in the ones that we attended as well. In the future, we hope that you can reevaluate your schedules to include more participation in other groups' discussions, as well as participate in the strategic planning process that is outlined in 5(i) of the proposed amendment. They are welcome and urged to be a part of the process, as are any individuals or groups within the agricultural sector.

Comment 2: ANOTHER LAYER OF COST AND BUREAUCRACY

Farming is one of the most heavily regulated industries. Farmers operate under the weight of thousands of regulations in the areas of food safety, worker safety, federal statistics reporting, pesticide use, soil conservation, irrigation and drainage, invasive species control, endangered species protection, pricing rules, packaging rules, zoning and land use rules, etc. Farmers are being crushed by the constant barrage of government paperwork, onerous reporting, and the difficulty of compliance.

We are genuinely concerned that the proposed new department will create yet another layer of bureaucracy that will be piled on farmers in this County. For example, sections 5.b, 5.h, 5.n, 5.o, of this proposal appear to be regulatory in nature.

Another grave concern for us, and for every County taxpayer, is the apparent lack of cost estimates for the creation of this new department. That information must be established and shared with the public now, so residents can adequately assess the proposed charter amendment before they cast their votes.

Response 2: Responding to to the statement “sections 5.b, 5.h, 5.n, 5.o, of this proposal appear to be regulatory in nature.”

Section 5(b) states "Prioritize the use of agricultural-zoned land to feed the local population and for sustainable and diversified agricultural activities."

Section 5(b) is not regulatory and instead helps with prioritizing the State's food security goals and the very loud requests from the community to grow more food locally for the local population.

Section 5(h) states "Assist the agricultural sector in complying with County, state, and federal regulations and permitting requirements."

5(h) uses the word “assist” not regulate or enforce. While yes, enforcement for those choosing not to follow the law will have consequences, just as they do now. The area of need that is drafted in the language gives priority for the department address helping with compliance, not create additional regulations. We realize that if the County has to start engaging in the current processes it will be the best way for them to see how they can be streamlined and more beneficial, rather than just rules they need to enforce. It will also allow them to see how regulations are affecting the ag community and can be a way to advocate for changes in state, federal and market regulations that the county feels are more harmful than beneficial.

Section 5(n) states “To the extent permitted by state and federal law, collaborate with the state department of agriculture and board of agriculture regarding restricted materials permits and use.”

Regardless of the County’s participation regulations for restricted use materials exist. The state currently only employs 2 inspectors for all of Maui County. Due to a lack of funding and insufficient staff, we have experienced incidents with the improper use of restricted use materials that have created a culture of distrust towards the conventional agricultural community. Even though the majority of our conventional farmers are compliant, a few bad apples have caused them to be burdened with community concern that could be addressed if we provided additional support for restricted use materials oversight. We need to build trust within our agricultural community that means providing efficient responses when there is abuse, as well as being able to provide documentation to provide clarity when accusations of abuse are not accurate. Additional oversight is needed to protect both sides.

Section 5(o) states “Perform agricultural property inspections and streamline County processes.”

This is to help create a process that allows farmers not to have to navigate each department individually, it’s purpose is to streamline processes to help farmers. We envision an application that includes the information that is needed by Planning, Water and RPT, so that only one application needs to be submitted and one inspection can happen for all of it. Then the department can disseminate that information to the other departments and helps save so much time and energy for the farmers who can now focus on farming instead.

Response 2 continued: We 100% agree that farming and agriculture in general is one of the most heavily regulated industries and that our whole agricultural sector is being crushed by the constant barrage of government paperwork, onerous reporting, and the difficulty of compliance. This is actually the largest reason for the proposal of this Department. Our farmers and various stakeholders within the agricultural sector need

help, and it needs to be a level that is accessible to them to actually find assistance. Many of the farmers and ag related businesses are currently left to try to navigate the complex, time consuming, and expensive regulations that occur at the federal, state, and county levels and also in the markets. They need unbiased and paid advocates that can help them. The responsibility of developing the agricultural sector has been left under the leadership of the Office of Economic Development who has been unable to provide adequate assistance to our agricultural sector.

In addition, competition for scarce funding, lack of oversight, and differences of opinion have created huge divides within the agricultural sector and its stakeholders. This is a huge issue that is most of the time unspoken by those on the fringes of various groups. It is extremely unfortunate, and our agricultural community needs the County to step in and start building bridges to connect us. The agricultural sector in Maui is very political and many of the farmers and players outside of certain groups feel they have no representation. I want to stress that I do not think that this breakdown is caused by malice, I genuinely think that everyone involved is doing their best to represent those that they work with; however, years of politics and clashes of personalities, has led to extreme turmoil within the ag sector. We need leadership that is trained, educated, paid, open-minded, and unbiased to really grow our agricultural sector and mend those conflicts.

That is also why this initiative was established, and shared with the public now. This is why we placed the resolution on a public website accessible to every single person with an internet connection here in Maui County. We switched out each draft, everytime it was changed, and did public outreach, through various modes of social media, and networking through ag related groups who reached out to participate. This was the most public process out of all the charter amendments that are being proposed at this time. We have been working with groups and individuals as well as the markets and everyday residents to get feedback and support for our ag sector. We received more testimony, both written and verbal, for this initiative than any other charter amendment currently proposed. We currently have over 1,500 residents that support a Department of Agriculture, that have access to the resolution, and want to see this move forward. This tells us the community feels that they deserve a right to vote on what they signed the petition and testified to support. It is not their fault that the MCFB has not been part of the process, they should not suffer without assistance any longer due to groups' desires to be more involved, when there was nothing preventing them from doing so now, or in the many years before this resolution was even proposed. The community has been waiting a long time for this kind of action, they deserve the right to vote.

Comment 3: THE PROPOSED DEPARTMENT IS DUPLICATIVE OF MANY FEDERAL AND STATE AGENCIES THAT HAVE GREATER RESOURCES AND EXPERTISE

Nearly all of the duties of this proposed department are duplicative of, and may conflict with those of existing federal and state government entities— the UH College of Tropical Agriculture,

Hawaii Association of Conservation Districts, Hawaii Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency, and other agencies of the US Department of Agriculture. There are sections that would overlap or conflict with the jurisdiction of the Hawaii Department of Labor and the Department of Land and Natural Resources. Rather than proposing more layers of redundant government bureaucracy, we propose working toward streamlining government and helping current departments innovate and be more efficient.

Response 3: The proposed Department is not seeking to compete nor conflict with any of these organizations, the goal is to work together to support and uplift these organizations and the ag sector as a whole, by expanding efforts both old and new. Overlap can be beneficial when you have a sector that is as neglected as ours, if in the future the overlap becomes unnecessary these efforts can be scaled back. As of now though, we need as much support as we can get in the agricultural sector

Many of these organizations need and want additional support and funding, and also see the need for expansion of efforts as well. Together we can all thrive, but divided we diminish the possibilities for the community, and as of right now, there is not an effort from the County to help bring all of these organizations together so that we all may do our best to serve our community.

Comment 4: MORE GOVERNMENT WON'T HELP FARMERS

Especially over the last 30 years, agriculture in Hawaii has declined. The primary reason for this is that costs here are significantly higher than in nearly every other place in the world, making it difficult for our farmers and ranchers to compete. Maui County cannot possibly control or fix everything; however, there are achievable actions it can take to significantly help grow agriculture. The County can address the availability and cost of ag water, the availability and affordability of long-term leases for ag land, the excessive regulatory burden on farmers, and the exorbitant cost of shipping for both inputs and exports. We might all agree that a highway could be paved between the islands with all the paper used to print the strategic agriculture plans, ag marketing plans, missions, and vision statements created to help agriculture in our state over the last decade. We all want sustainability, food security, resiliency, and "regenerative" agriculture, but the core issues of land, water, unnecessary regulations, and shipping costs remain as barriers for successful agriculture in Hawaii. Rather than duplicating others' missions, we hope that the Council will work to leverage the massive infrastructure, resources, and expertise already in place, and focus instead on core issues.

Response 4: While we understand the viewpoint and understand the hesitancy with government, we truly feel that government is a tool and it can be used to help or hurt. Currently, due to a lack of resources and assistance paired with a barrage of regulations, the agricultural sector has been extremely hurt by the government. While we understand that the trust building process will not be easy, we want to, and need, to make it right. We need to use

the local government in Maui County, to start helping undue as much of the damage that has been done as possible. Only we can fix the mess that we have created due to poor investment decisions and a lack of empathy for the struggling farmer. This help needs to include finding and providing additional funding and paid employees to go out and help provide one on one assistance to our farmers, as well as other areas of the ag sector.

We agree that the County can address the availability and cost of ag water, the availability and affordability of long-term leases for ag land, the excessive regulatory burden on farmers, and the exorbitant cost of shipping for both inputs and exports. As well as so many other issues that cause unnecessary burden for our farmers and the ag sector. That is exactly why this Department is being proposed.

You are also right when you said that “We might all agree that a highway could be paved between the islands with all the paper used to print the strategic agriculture plans, ag marketing plans, missions, and vision statements created to help agriculture in our state over the last decade. We all want sustainability, food security, resiliency, and "regenerative" agriculture, but the core issues of land, water, unnecessary regulations, and shipping costs remain as barriers for successful agriculture in Hawaii.” It is perfectly stated and that is why there is no more time or desire for more working groups or discussions that drag this out more than it needs to be. We need action now! Our community wants it now, and we are trying to give them the opportunity to tell the county that themselves. Through a county-wide vote that includes every resident who chooses to participate, regardless of their affiliations with groups. We hope that you can see that they deserve that opportunity, after all the years of meetings, discussions, studies and very little action.

Comment 5: MAUI FARMERS NEED ADVOCACY NOT MORE REGULATION

If there is a desire to strengthen the current agriculture support system within the county, we would like to discuss the creation of a position for an agriculture advocate, or ombudsman, or commissioner—whatever you call this person, they need to fulfill an advocacy role rather than a regulatory role. Farmers cannot cope with another costly regulatory bureaucracy. We truly appreciate the Council's support for agriculture and this opportunity to provide suggestions from Maui's dedicated multigenerational farmers and ranchers. We recognize that the County funds at your disposal are finite and that there are many competing demands. Because of the hardships caused by the pandemic, we will need to work within even tighter budgets than before.

Response 5: There is no “if” about it, our community wants to strengthen the current agriculture support system within the county, they want the creation of multiple positions for agriculture and its various sectors, not just an additional advocate for farmers, they want a department. They want agriculture to be taken seriously and they want the County

to start investing in local industries that are not reliant on tourism and a huge realization for many, was because of this pandemic.

They know that we all, not just the government, will have to work with tighter budgets and that we need to prioritize what we invest in. They want to invest in our farmers, our markets, our local businesses and our community as a whole. They are ready and want to see a serious investment into our agricultural sector, and they deserve it.

Comment Conclusion: We are committed to working to help agriculture now and for future generations. We are asking you to defer this item today, and not be tempted to rush this through. Agriculture as an industry deserves a thoughtful and deliberate process to find a better way forward for the county's involvement. Please allow us to work collaboratively with you toward improving farm and ranch viability. We look forward to the opportunity.

Response Conclusion: Once again we agree it is unfortunate that MCFB has not participated in this discussion. In the future, we hope that you can reevaluate your schedules to include more participation in other groups' discussions, as well as participate in the strategic planning process that is outlined in 5(i) of the proposed amendment. However, we still believe that it is not the the communities fault that the MCFB has not been part of the process, they should not suffer without assistance any longer due to your groups' desire to be more involved, when there was nothing preventing you from doing so now, or in the many years before this resolution was even proposed. The community has been waiting for a long time for this kind of action, they deserve the right to vote, please respect the voices of the community that have come forward and asked to vote.

GET Committee

From: Tom Blackburn-Rodriguez <tominmaui@icloud.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 30, 2020 9:05 AM
To: GET Committee
Subject: GET Charter Issues Testimony by Tom Blackburn-Rodriguez for Go Maui Inc.
Attachments: Tom 2 Testimony GET Committee 6-30-20.docx

Aloha,

GET Testimony from Go Maui, Inc. on the proposed Charter amendments to create a Department of Agriculture and a Department of Housing.

Please put in the written record for today's 10 AM GET meeting.

Mahalo,

Tom Blackburn-Rodriguez
Go Maui, Inc.
85 Manino Circle, Apt. 202
Kihei, HI 96753
tominmaui@icloud.com
808-283-4570

**Written Testimony Submitted to the GET Committee
Tuesday, June 30, 2020
10:00 AM**

**Tom Blackburn-Rodriguez
Go Maui, Inc.
85 Manino Circle, Apt. 202
808-283-4570
tominmaui@icloud.com**

Good morning Chair Molina and Members of the Government, Ethics and Transparency Committee.

My name is Tom Blackburn-Rodriguez. I live in Kihei and I am testifying on behalf of Go Maui, Inc., as their Executive Consultant.

Go Maui, Inc.'s mission is to empower local residents to obtain housing, educational opportunities, and employment in a healthy environment and vibrant economy while respecting our diverse cultures. More Information about Go Maui can be found on our website at GoMauiInc.org.

I am testifying this morning on the proposals to create a new Department of Housing and a new Department of Agriculture.

When it comes to the Department of Agriculture, Go Maui believes that this matter should be deferred since we have been told the Maui Farm Bureau (MFB) was not asked to provide input/feedback and there was a lack of time for them to submit a response.

Members of the MFB have told Go Maui that "Ag does not need additional regulatory oversight." We understand that the MFB will be submitting a different proposal that has the support of both the Ag Working Group as well as the Hawaii Farmers Union United.

Unmet housing needs are tearing our community apart and the reliance on imported foods has taken on an even greater significance in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic. While the needs are real, we cannot support proposals that have not been appropriately reviewed, fiscally accounted for, and may add only another "layer of bureaucracy".

The question of how the proposals will be paid for given the loss of revenue expected next year and in subsequent years is paramount.

How many new County employees will be required? How much will their salaries and benefits cost?

What impact will the costs of a new department have on meeting the growing social service needs on Maui for food, rent, mortgage assistance, childcare and medical care?

What additional oversight from the Administration will be needed?

Also, how will these departments be created from existing programs within the Department of Housing and Human Concerns and the Office of Economic Development.

What will be the final mission statements of each proposed department?

Go Maui believes these are only a few of the many questions that must be answered before proceeding.

In addition, if a County Manager is voted upon and approved, is this the right time to present two new departments to a newly hired County Manager who will also be responsible for overseeing a major transition in our government?

Shouldn't we wait until the County Manager has been on the job for a year and has experienced one County budget cycle?

Finally, wouldn't these two proposals be best served by the next Charter Commission to enable public hearings so that a thorough community engagement process can be conducted?

In conclusion, Go Maui respectfully recommends that before any final decision is made, these proposals be thoroughly reviewed for their fiscal, administrative, and management implications.

The bottom remains that both proposals would incur substantial costs and be competing for funding in a severely dwindling County government tax base.

Thank you for your work behalf of Maui County and the opportunity to testify today.

GET Committee

From: Georgia P <mauitimeisright@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 30, 2020 11:11 AM
To: William Greenleaf
Cc: GET Committee
Subject: Re: Resolution for a Department of Agriculture ballot initiative

Thank you! This is wonderful testimony.

GP

On Mon, Jun 22, 2020 at 10:29 AM William Greenleaf <bgreenleaf.maui@yahoo.com> wrote:
Aloha Chair and GET Committee Members:

I am in strong support of the Resolution to create a Maui County Department of Ag.

During the testimony last week, I was asked by Ms Rawlins-Fernandez, 'what would a Maui Dept of Ag provide different from Hawaii State Department of Ag'. I responded that HDoA is underfunded and over burdened. Ms. Karaca, in her excellent presentation, provided detail about the burdens on an underfunded State Department of Ag.

Historically, has Agriculture grown and diversified on Maui in the past few decades? The answer is a resounding NO! That is what we can expect if we continue to do what we have been doing.

Creating a Department that will attend to Ag needs and opportunities will **change the course of history for Maui.**

This is the time when the people are strongly tuned into the possibilities of agriculture for both food security and for Careers that will be a companion industry for tourism.

How will the voters gain an understanding of this Resolution? Ms Karaca has created an extensive presentation that can be aired on Akaku and at focus groups leading up to the Nov 2020 election.

Agriculture will be supported by the Federal Government more intensely than ever. Grant opportunities pursued by a Maui County Department of Ag will expand budget opportunities beyond Maui County funds.

This is a historic moment. Maui was an Agricultural powerhouse. It's time to re-create that power. It can be said: 'it takes a village'...in this case, 'it's takes a Council to create a Department to empower the village'.

Respectfully,
Bill Greenleaf
Greenleaf Farm
Makawao