May 22, 2019

Board of Land and Natural Resources
1151 Punchbowl Street
Honolulu, Hawai‘i 96813
email: blnr.testimony@hawaii.gov

Re: Testimony in Support of Agenda Item D1

Aloha Chair Case and Members of the Board of Land and Natural Resources,

My name is Bino Fitzgerald; my wife Michelle and I own and operate Hanalei Poi Company, LLC. We have humbly been in business since 1998 and have been fortunate to serve the farming community of Hanalei for over 20 years. I was born and raised on Kauai to a farming family who grew taro in 1949, then rice, and now taro again in Hanalei Valley. Our children will hopefully carry on this tradition one day.

The viability of our lifestyle and farming community of Hanalei has been threatened by major flooding in 2018. We have experienced crop losses like never before due to damage to our farm lands and irrigation systems. The result has been a decrease in poi production of over 50% even though it has been over a year since the record flooding of April 14, 2018. Many families including precious keiki and kupuna are going without poi, the staple of their diets, due to this natural disaster.

I humbly ask for your support and strongly recommend that the board approve the easement application being considered on Friday’s agenda. This will allow farmers to maintain vital irrigation systems and get water to fields that would otherwise not be viable to grow taro.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter. Please join with me in supporting our precious resource “the taro farmer,” and protecting and preserving our culture and lifestyle by granting this easement.

Sincerely,

Bino Fitzgerald
bino@hanaleipoi.com