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MEETING OF THE BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Kalanimoku Building
DLNR Boardroom
1151 Punchbowl St.
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

March 27, 2026
9:00 a.m.

Testimony on Agenda item D6: Acquisition of Private Lands Associated with the Wahiawā Irrigation System as Provided for in Act 218, 2023 Session Laws of Hawaii for Addition to the Wahiawā Freshwater State Recreation Area Identified as Tax Map Keys; 2) Rescission of the Wahiawā Dam Remediation Schedule issued to Dole Food Company Hawai'i by the Board on April 9, 2021, upon Transfer of certain Tax Map Keys to the Department of Land and Natural Resources and to the Agribusiness Development Corporation, including the Wahiawā Dam and the Ditch System Associated with the Wahiawā Irrigation System; 3) Delegation to the Chairperson to Negotiate the Terms and Conditions of the Transfer Agreement; 4) Delegation to the Chairperson to Enter into the Transfer Agreement; 5) Issuance of Management Right-of-Entry to the Division of State Parks; and 6) Issuance of Set Aside to the Division of State Parks for Addition to the Wahiawā Freshwater State Recreation Area for Park Purposes.

Aloha Acting Chairperson Kanaka'ole and Members of the Board:

I am Brian Miyamoto, Executive Director of the Hawai'i Farm Bureau (HFB). Organized since 1948, the HFB comprises 1,800 farm family members statewide and serves as Hawai'i's voice of agriculture to protect, advocate, and advance the social, economic, and educational interests of our diverse agricultural community.

The Hawai'i Farm Bureau strongly supports the State's acquisition of the Wahiawā Irrigation System pursuant to Act 218, Session Laws of Hawai'i 2023.

The Wahiawā Irrigation System is critical for O'ahu farmers and ranchers who depend on it for their operations. Water availability is a basic necessity for farmers and ranchers to maintain and expand production, particularly during periods of drought and increasing climate variability. A reliable and affordable supply of irrigation water is also a key factor when farmers are deciding whether to start new agricultural operations or expand existing ones.

For decades, the Wahiawā Irrigation System has provided an essential source of water to agricultural lands in Central and North O‘ahu, including Waialua and Hale‘iwa. Farmers in these regions grow a wide range of crops, including cabbage, bell peppers, tomatoes, cucumbers, kalo, eggplant, okra, papaya, citrus, avocado, banana, dragon fruit, watermelon, and green onions. Continued access to irrigation water is necessary for these farmers to remain viable and to help Hawai‘i increase local food production.

The Wahiawā Irrigation System, currently owned by Dole Food Company, was previously listed for sale, raising concerns about the future availability and affordability of irrigation water for farmers. No individual farmer or agricultural operator can reasonably afford to purchase and maintain a large irrigation system of this scale. If the system were acquired by a private entity with no commitment to agriculture, there is a real risk that water rates could increase substantially or that water delivery could be discontinued entirely, putting agricultural operations and local food production at risk.

Act 218 recognized the importance of this system and appropriated funding to allow the State to acquire, repair, and maintain the Wahiawā Irrigation System and associated infrastructure. State ownership will help ensure that this critical water source continues to support agriculture and that the system can be maintained and managed in the public interest.

Securing long-term access to reliable irrigation water is essential if Hawai‘i is serious about strengthening food security, supporting farmers, and expanding local agricultural production. The acquisition of the Wahiawā Irrigation System represents an important step toward achieving those goals.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of Agenda Item D-6 and for your continued support of Hawai‘i’s farmers and ranchers.