TESTIMONY FOR
THE MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES

DATE: FRIDAY, MAY 24, 2019
TIME: 9:15 A.M.
PLACE: KALANIMOKU BUILDING
LAND BOARD CONFERENCE ROOM 132

Re: Testimony in Strong Support of Agenda Item 1
Grant of Term, Non-Exclusive Easement to Wai‘oli Valley Taro Hui, Inc. for Surface Water Diversion and Irrigation Purposes, Wai‘oli, Hanalei, Kauai, Tax Map Key: (4) 5-6-002:001 (portion).

TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important matter. My name is Rachel James, and I am in strong support of the Land Board expeditiously granting the Wai‘oli Valley Taro Hui, Inc.’s requested easement.

As a person for whom poi was *literally* a life saver (it was my sustenance during Na Wahine o Ke Kai), seeing the devastation of the Wai’oli Valley Taro Hui (“Hui”), Inc.’s taro fields hit home. The floods damaged the traditional lo’i kalo system in Wai’oli, as well as the homes of the farmers who work so hard to maintain this historic system to produce present-day livelihoods. These farmers are still suffering as they continue to cope with a limited ability to repair flood-caused damage to the traditional lo’i kalo system upstream irrigation channels. Many of their fields lie fallow due to an insufficient supply of water.

As a student in the Environmental Law Clinic at the William S. Richardson School of Law this spring, I was fortunate to use the legal skills I’ve learned in law school to support the Wai‘oli taro farmers in their restoration efforts. During the clinic I visited the farmers and saw firsthand the acres of damaged, under-irrigated taro fields, as well as the jigsaw of boulders and felled

trees obstructing the mãnowai (traditional intake from the main stream channel), po'owai (secondary diversion to traditional irrigation ditches), and 'auwai (traditional kalo irrigation ditches).

To restore the traditional lo'I kalo system will require a substantial undertaking by the farmers and their community partners. Collaboration is necessary, and the Board is a valued partner is this restoration effort. Farming is both the farmers' livelihood and ours, because what they do directly contributes to the health and wellness of the people for whom they supply taro across the entire state.

The inclusion of this agenda item for the May 24, 2019 hearing gives me hope that each of the Board members understand the importance and necessity of expeditious action in support of these farmers. Thank you for honoring the taro farmers' important contributions to our state's well-being by placing their request on the agenda.

I am grateful for this opportunity to testify and encourage each of you to vote in support of the Hui being granted their requested easement.

Thank you for welcoming this testimony.

Sincerely,

Rachel James, J.D.