HB 234
RELATING TO LAND USE

House Committee on
Water and Land Use Planning

Public Hearing - February 28, 1995
9:00 A.M., Room 1310 SOT

By
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HB 234 would amend Chapter 205 to establish a land evaluation and site assessment system to identify "important" agricultural lands, and it further requires a two-thirds majority of the land use commission to approve any reclassification or rezoning of "important" agricultural lands.

Our statement on this measure does not constitute an institutional position of the University of Hawaii.

The ongoing difficulties of Hawaii's large-scale agricultural interests are abundantly evident. However, the problem addressed by this measure is unclear. At present, 80% of our agricultural land is vacant, and prime ag lands have been identified for years by both federal and state surveys. Thus, the availability of agriculturally suitable lands does not appear to be an issue, and another set of criteria designating "important" ag lands will not in itself promote diversified agriculture or increase agricultural self-sufficiency.

Furthermore, agricultural production goals established by a blue-ribbon committee will not alter the fact that we are a market economy, where production is governed by demand. Given our present fiscal constraints, the substantial support required to field this committee every five years would be more constructively spent on a low-interest loan program to assist small-scale farmers directly.