HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TWENTY-FOURTH LEGISLATURE, 2008
STATE OF HAWAII

# H.R. NO. 121

# HOUSE RESOLUTION

HONORING THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII FOR ITS RESPECTFUL ACTIONS TO ASSIGN ITS THREE PATENTS ON TARO TO THE GREATER NATIVE HAWAIIAN COMMUNITY AND SUPPORTING STATE FUNDING FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII TO FURTHER RESEARCH AND DEVELOP A MEANS TO IDENTIFY GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS.

WHEREAS, the University of Hawaii has come to both recognize and appreciate the significance and the unique place that taro occupies as the embodiment of the most sacred of the Hawaiian gods in the lives and culture of the native Hawaiian community and to that end, has placed a high priority on the treatment of taro in a culturally sensitive and appropriate manner; and

WHEREAS, in 2002, three patents were granted to the University of Hawaii from work conducted in the 1990s at the request of Samoan taro growers to address the near eradication of their taro crops to a leaf blight. A number of cultivars were developed from crosses of Hawaiian and Palauan taro strains -- the latter obtained specifically for this purpose with the consent (including proper permitting) of Palauan taro growers and Palauan government officials; and

WHEREAS, using traditional breeding techniques, the University produced three strains that were shown to have increased disease resistance; and

WHEREAS, on May 16, 2006, the University of Hawaii unequivocally stated its intention, in the case of the three patents the University holds on taro -- which are not genetically modified -- to make an exception to the University's standard policy of holding all patents; and

WHEREAS, on June 2, 2006, the University of Hawaii announced that it would assign the three patents related to development of disease resistant taro to the greater native Hawaiian community; and

WHEREAS, the effort to incorporate bioengineered organisms into the environment, the supply chain, and particularly into the food supply is often met with resistance by retailers and consumers for a variety of reasons; and

WHEREAS, a method to effectively identify bioengineered organisms in the field, the laboratory, and in the market in a reliable, non-destructive, and non-disruptive way would substantially mitigate consumers' fear and uncertainty; and

WHEREAS, the University of Hawaii has recently made advances in the use of green fluorescent protein as a reliable genetic marker and, when combined with sensor technology being developed by the Maui Media Lab, may provide this identification to detect bio-organisms expressing fluorescent green protein in a non-invasive and non-destructive way; and

WHEREAS, this identification technique would provide enhanced protection to the natural biodiversity of the environment, while ensuring the integrity and increasing the value of the local food supply chain by empowering consumers with regard to identification of bioengineered organisms; and

WHEREAS, in the application of an identification technique, scientists benefit by being able to monitor and protect the integrity and diversity of the natural biosphere; producers benefit by being able to track their products from the field to the markets; retailers benefit by being able to increase sales to informed consumers and reduce costs from fewer product returns; consumers benefit by gaining an informed choice of products; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the Twenty-fourth Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2008, that the Legislature honors the University of Hawaii for its respectful actions to assign its three patents on taro to the greater native Hawaiian community; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature supports state funding for the University of Hawaii to further research and develop affordable, nearly instantaneous, and simple methods for genetically modified organisms stacked with genetic tags to be identified in the field, in the market, in distribution, and in the natural environment; and



# H.R. NO. 121

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the University of Hawaii is encouraged to further develop methods to clearly, objectively, and authentically identify natural organisms and genetically modified organisms husbanded within or imported or exported to or from the State by means such as the use of green fluorescent protein genetic markers in support of the integrity of the State's natural biodiversity; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this Resolution be transmitted to the President and the Chair of the Board of Regents of the University of Hawaii, the Keawanui Convention, the Executive Director of the Maui Media Lab, and the Hawaiian Learning Center.

OFFERED BY: _____

MAR 05 2008