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Testimony of
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before the
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

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**SUPPORT
SB 2056
RELATING TO SOIL CLASSIFICATIONS.**

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran and Members of the Committee, the Hawai'i State Energy Office (HSEO) supports SB 2056, which requires the Office of Planning and Sustainable Development (OPSD) to conduct a study of the suitability of the State's current soil overall (master) productivity rating system classified by the Land Study Bureau's (LSB) detailed land classification. SB 2056 also requires a report to the Legislature and appropriates funds.

HSEO agrees with Section 1 of SB 2056 that the LSB system "reflects the agricultural activities of plantation sugar cane and pineapple production that dominated Hawaii agriculture at the time of the study" and may no longer be appropriate to guide Hawaii's food and agricultural sustainability goals. Further, SB 2056 references the U.S. Department of Agriculture's national soil classification system as an example of other methods that can be used to classify agricultural soils more appropriately.

Current state law (sections 205-2 and 205-4.5, Hawai'i Revised Statutes) directs the permissibility of solar energy projects on Agricultural land based on the land's LSB rating. However, in some cases the practical use of the lands for agriculture, or co-location of crops or livestock with solar energy projects, is greater or less than indicated by the soils alone. For example, although the soils in one area may have a productivity rating that is higher than another area, the availability or lack of irrigation water may

encourage or constrain the actual productivities of the various sites. The degree to which these factors are captured (or not) in the current system deserves review.

Therefore, HSEO believes that a study of the suitability of soil classification systems for the regulation of agricultural lands would contribute to a better understanding of Hawai'i's agricultural lands, systems, potential, and needs.

HSEO defers to the appropriate agency for administration and fiscal matters.

HSEO supports this bill provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities indicated in the Executive Supplemental Budget.

HSEO's comments are guided by its mission to promote energy efficiency, renewable energy, and clean transportation to help achieve a resilient, clean energy, decarbonized economy.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.