



Testimony of the Biotechnology Industry Organization

**Submitted to the Senate Committees on
Energy, Environment & International Affairs
Water, Land & Agriculture
Media, Arts, Science & Technology**

February 10, 2005

Regarding Senate Bill 1425 and 1692: Regulation of Bioprospecting Practices

On behalf of the Biotechnology Industry Organization and its more than 1,000 member companies, please accept this testimony for Senate Bills 1425 and 1692, which regard bioprospecting. BIO supports the sentiments of both bills: to put forth a responsible framework to manage the state's natural resources. We do, however, have serious concerns about some of the specifics within the bills.

As background, BIO is the national trade association for the biotechnology industry, representing more than 1,000 member companies, in the United States and in 33 nations. BIO has worked closely with the State of Hawaii for the past several years to grow and attract technology-based industries that bring high-skill, high-wage jobs to the state. BIO is now joined by the Hawaii Life Sciences Council (HLSC) in its mission to work with the Hawaii Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism (DBEDT), Hawaii High Technology Development Corporation (HTDC), the University of Hawaii, and others to promote the life sciences industry development in Hawaii.

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“Bioprospecting” is the search for previously undiscovered microbes in a variety of ecosystems. These microbes and compounds can have highly unique characteristics with unmatched applications and benefits in many arenas, including medicine, manufacturing and scientific research. The life sciences industry is committed to the socially responsible use of biotechnology to save or improve lives, improve the quality and abundance of food, and improve the environment.

The life sciences depend upon the preservation of biological diversity, which is so much in evidence throughout Hawaii. As such, private and public entities with biotech research interests are committed to sustaining the aesthetic, ecological, and economically valuable resources that biodiversity provides. Hawaii is heavily invested in supporting life sciences research and growing this industry’s presence in the state. We hope the policies put in place to protect Hawaii’s natural resources do so without compromising the state’s enormous investment in research and in growing its technology-based economy. Some specific points for your consideration follow:

- Definition of “bioprospecting” in SB 1425 is overly broad and seems to confuse agricultural practices with this activity. This definition and the ag-focused approach would undoubtedly result in many unintended consequences.
- The prohibition proposed in SB 1425 would damage not only advancement of important biological research but also would undermine the economic policies and research interests of the state.
- SB 1692 is unnecessarily broad in its inclusion of “biotechnology”. To be most effective in its mission, “biotechnology” need not be included in the resulting regulations or proposed inventory effort.
- A broad collection of stakeholders has worked together in the past few years around this issue. Encouraging progress has been made by this group to develop consensus on the state’s approach to bioprospecting. A recent evolution out of these efforts (HB 247, SB 484) is to first conduct a study. BIO believes this is a prudent step and should precede any policymaking.

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BIO stands ready to work with University of Hawaii, Hawaii Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism, and other stakeholders to ensure the preservation of Hawaii's biological and natural resources. We don't, however, believe the preservation of the state's resources are best achieved by these two bills and urge members of the Committees to oppose Senate Bills 1425 and 1692.

We thank you for your consideration and look forward to answering any questions or provide additional information to the committees as needed.

Respectfully submitted,

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The Biotechnology Industry Organization (BIO) is the national trade organization, based in Washington, DC, representing more than 1000 biotechnology companies, academic institutions and biotechnology centers in all 50 states and 33 countries. BIO members are involved in the research and development of health care, agricultural and environmental biotechnology products. In Hawaii, we work with our state affiliate, the Hawaii Life Sciences Council.