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City Council, City and County of Honolulu
530 S. King Street
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Tuesday, April 3, 9 a.m.
Honolulu Hale - Committee Meeting Room

Testimony in opposition to Resolution 12-57 calling for the State of Hawaii and US FDA to require labeling of genetically engineered food.

Pioneer Hi-Bred International, Inc. produces corn, soybean and sunflower seed crops in Hawaii, with operations in two locations on Oahu and two locations on Kauai. Pioneer produces both genetically engineered and conventional seed, sold to farmers in the US and around the world. We carry out research and development at our sites and multiply seed to develop new hybrids and varieties that are more productive. Pioneer employs approximately 200 people on Oahu in a wide range of types of jobs, with degrees ranging from a high school education to Ph. D.

The US Food and Drug Administration has reviewed science-based information to determine whether biotech foods, also referred to as GMO foods, require a label indicating the process by which the food was developed. The US Food and Drug Administration has determined these foods are safe and do not require labeling. Labeling of foods in the US focuses on the ingredients and composition of the food, not the process used to develop or grow a food product. Labels provide nutritional information for consumers and point to potential health hazards such as allergens. Labels inform the consumer of the composition and nutritional value of food, for example whether apple juice is from apples or from pear juice, sugar and flavorings.

There is widespread agreement among scientists through scientific studies and evaluation of data that biotech foods are safe. No significant difference has been found between foods produced using biotechnology when compared to their conventional counterparts. Scientific evaluation by the US Food and Drug Administration consistently shows biotech whole foods to be safe as well as foods with genetically engineered ingredients.

Consumers that may wish to avoid eating genetically engineered foods already have a way to easily differentiate products by purchasing products labeled as organic. Organic labeling allows consumers to easily identify food products that do not have GE content. Our local farmers already use organic and GMO-free labels and we already find clearly labeled organic and GMO-free food products on our grocery store shelves. Consumers wishing to avoid these products will turn to buying organic products and products labeled GMO-free, as is the case today. We will end up where we are today; individuals avoiding GMO foods will buy organic foods.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in support of science-based decision making, in opposition to proposed legislation requiring labeling of genetically engineered food products.