

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII AT MANOA
Environmental Center

A UNIT OF THE WATER RESOURCES RESEARCH CENTER

RL:2255

HB 1684 HD 1
RELATING TO INVASIVE SPECIES

House Committee on Judiciary

Public Hearing – January 26, 2010
2:30 p.m., State Capitol, Conference Room 325

By

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Kenneth Kaneshiro, Center for Conservation Research & Training

HB 1684 prevents and reduces the intentional introduction and spread of invasive species by establishing severe penalties appropriate to the harm caused by the intentional introduction and spread of invasive species to the economy, natural environment, and the health and lifestyle of Hawaii's people. We emphasize that our testimony on this measure does not represent an official position of the University of Hawaii.

The Environmental Center supports the intent of this bill. Invasive species represent the single biggest threat to Hawaii's economy and natural environment. Pests have already caused millions of dollars in crop losses, the extinction of native species, the destruction of native forests, and the spread of disease. Many more harmful pests, however, currently threaten to invade Hawaii and wreak further damage. Alien species have had a tremendous effect on Hawaii's unique flora and fauna. Due to its isolation, Hawaii originally had thousands of unique species found nowhere else on Earth. It has, however, suffered the highest rates of extinction of any area in the United States and one of the highest rates anywhere in the world, with hundreds or possibly thousands of unique species already extinct. The primary agent of this remarkable loss of native biodiversity has been the massive introduction by humans of alien species to the Hawaiian Islands.

We suggest however, several changes to the bill. On page 1, line 4 delete the word "can". Invasive species do cause millions of dollars of harm to Hawaii now. In addition to "crop loses" cited on page 1, line 5 there are also negative impacts to non-agricultural commodities such as nursery stock, to the aquatic environment and native stream biota as a results of non-native introductions. The use of the words "by natural predators" is confusing; there are no natural predators for most introduced pests in Hawaii.

We note that the purpose of the bill is to reduce the intentional introduction and spread of invasive species by establishing severe penalties. We do not think the penalties outlined on page 2,

lines 11-21 and on page 3, lines 6 to 11 are particularly severe at the lower limit. We suggest the lower limits of the fines be on the order of \$1,000 instead of \$100 and \$5,000 instead of \$500. This would make the penalties painful.

Section 2, subsection 2(g)(4) might raise an issue with collection of specimens for research purposes, including collecting rare plants to propagate in the laboratory as part of the genetic safety net program. On page 5, line 7, we suggest either eliminating this item, or including the language "that is prohibited or restricted" as is used in the previous three items.

Finally, some of the fines collected should go to fund the Hawaii Invasive Species Council (HISC) to help continue the work of preventing and eradicating invasive species.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this bill.