



State of Hawaii
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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LATE TESTIMONY

TESTIMONY OF RUSSELL S. KOKUBUN CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2012
9:00 AM, ROOM 312

HOUSE BILL NO. 1940 MAKING AN APPROPRIATION FOR AGRICULTURE INSPECTORS

Chairpersons Tsuji and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill No. 1940. The purpose of this Act is to appropriate funds from the agricultural development and food security special fund to fund plant quarantine inspectors and support staff. The Department supports this measure with the caution that too heavy a reliance on special funds is not good for the long term and possibly handicaps any necessary future expansion of the program. At some point, General Funds should be utilized to fund Inspector positions.

Prior to layoffs in 2009, there were 95 plant quarantine inspectors statewide, covering all domestic maritime and air cargo inspections and handling import permits for regulated plants, animals, and microorganisms. Currently, there are only 50 agricultural inspectors statewide.

PORT	2009 STAFF (PRIOR TO LAYOFFS)	CURRENT STAFF	CURRENT VACANCIES
OAHU	61	36	14
MAUI	17	13	4
KAUAI	3	2	0
KONA	4	2	1
HILO	10	7	3



TOTAL	95	60	22
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The following table shows the number of pest interceptions found at the airports during the sixth month period prior to the layoffs in 2009 and for the same period in 2010. The interception rate dropped by half statewide and by 762% on Oahu.

AIRPORT	INTERCEPTIONS JULY 2009 TO DEC 2009	INTERCEPTIONS JULY 2010 TO DEC 2010
OAHU	663	87
MAUI	722	639
KAUAI	29	0
KONA	18	4
HILO	25	0
STATEWIDE	1,457	730

The Department has moved forward on filling all the vacant positions, however, filling the vacancies will not get us back to 2009 levels. Prior to reduction-in-force, the Biosecurity program did not have sufficient staffing to cover all program segments, such as interisland and military inspections.

In addition, on September 27, 2011, DOT informed HDOA that (1) the FAA funding for Agriculture inspectors at Kahului Airport would be discontinued; (2) that FAA has made a determination that Airport special funds cannot be used to fund the inspectors because it would constitute a revenue diversion infraction which would jeopardize Federal funding for other airport projects areas; and (3) that HDOA should continue to take advantage of appropriate opportunities for securing funding resources from the Legislature.

Making an appropriation for new inspector and support staff positions would allow the Biosecurity program to be fully functional and bring back 24-hour coverage on Oahu lessening inspection delays, conduct more comprehensive interisland inspections, implement rapid response programs for incipient pest outbreaks, and participate in emergency response. It would also allow us to implement new tasks such as implementation of the environmentally important Myrtaceae rule and work with DOH in mosquito prevention. The World Health Organization reported that about 3.3 billion

people - half of the world's population - are at risk of malaria. Every year, this leads to about 250 million malaria cases and nearly one million deaths. And yet because of inspector shortages at DOH and HDOA from the 2009 reduction-in-force, mosquito prevention is no longer being done at the ports. Implementing the Myrtaceae rule would allow us to protect the Ohi'a forests, which is critical as no other area in the United States has suffered as much loss to biodiversity as Hawaii. In state rankings, Hawaii leads the United States in risk to diversity in plants, mammals, birds, and reptiles. Lastly but just as critical, the funding of agriculture inspectors will allow us to assist the agricultural sector with pest management programs and export certification. As of 2009, USDA notified agricultural shippers that they would be subject to suspensions if their shipments were infested with invasive species. Since that time, suspensions have occurred and have left shippers and growers of all agricultural sectors at risk of losing domestic markets, and as such, only a strong certification program will allow us to counter current federal actions.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



LATE TESTIMONY

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February 8, 2012

HEARING BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

TESTIMONY ON HB 1940 MAKING AN APPROPRIATION FOR AGRICULTURE INSPECTORS

Room 312
9:00 AM

Chair Tsuji, Vice Chair Hashem, and Members of the Committee:

I am Brian Miyamoto, Chief Operating Officer and Government Affairs Liaison for the Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation (HFBF). Organized since 1948, the HFBF is comprised of 1,800 farm family members statewide, and serves as Hawaii's voice of agriculture to protect, advocate and advance the social, economic and educational interest of our diverse agricultural community.

HFBF is in strong support of HB 1940, which appropriates funds from the Agriculture Development and Food Security Special Fund to fund plant quarantine inspectors and support staff.

Recent HDOA budget cuts have left the Department of Agriculture unable to properly support and service the needs of the agricultural industry. The current staff level of HDOA inspectors jeopardizes Hawaii's agricultural industry, environment, and economy. It is an undeniable fact that the threat of invasive species entering Hawaii is on the increase, and this increase may cripple our already fragile agricultural industry.

The HDOA inspectors are Hawaii's first line of defense against invasive species. They help curtail invasive species that enter the state through imported cargo. Invasive species have become one of the most devastating problems impacting Hawaii's agricultural industry and the havoc they cause to Hawaii's environment and economy are evident in the demise of the native willi willi trees, the infestation of imported Christmas trees, the introduction of the coqui frog, coffee berry borer, little fire ant, and others pests and diseases that devastate our agricultural crops.

I can be reached at (808) 848-2074 if you have any questions. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



Hawaii Floriculture & Nursery Association

Testimony for the Twenty Sixth Legislature, 2012
State of Hawaii
Conference Room 312

Wednesday, February 8, 2012 9:00 A.M.

A bill for an act
HB 1940 Making an Appropriation for Agricultural Inspectors

Supporting HB 1940 Making an Appropriation for Agricultural Inspectors

My name is Eric S. Tanouye and I am the President for the Hawaii Floriculture and Nursery Association. HFNA is a statewide umbrella organization with approximately 300 members. Our membership is made up with breeders, hybridizers, propagators, growers, shippers, wholesalers, retailers, educators, and the allied industry, which supports our efforts in agriculture.

We **support** this bill that will fund the important and critical Agricultural Inspectors that Hawaii needs to control Invasive species, which is an important concern to Hawaii with our delicate ecosystem and our need to import products into our islands. Farms and Nurseries are well aware of the need to stop invasive species as new pests have to be controlled, which can lead to an increase in the cost of production as new controls have to be established and implemented. Then as an exporter invasive species that would threaten other areas can lead to threats of embargo and quarantines. Agricultural Inspectors are a necessity to protect the health, safety and welfare of the public. This will also help to alleviate the delay of perishables being shipped via cargo transportation.

If you have any questions at this time, I would be happy to discuss them and can be reached by phone at 808-959-3535 ext 22, cell 960-1433 and email eric@greenpointnursery.com.

Supporting Agriculture and Hawaii,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eric S. Tanouye', written over a faint, larger version of the signature.

Eric S. Tanouye
President
Hawaii Floriculture and Nursery Association

LATE TESTIMONY

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Tuesday, February 07, 2012 5:51 PM
To: AGRtestimony
Cc: farmfreshhawaii@gmail.com
Subject: Testimony for HB1940 on 2/8/2012 9:00:00 AM

Testimony for AGR 2/8/2012 9:00:00 AM HB1940

Conference room: 312
Testifier position: Support
Testifier will be present: No
Submitted by: Juanita Kawmoto Brown
Organization: Environmental Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hi
E-mail: farmfreshhawaii@gmail.com
Submitted on: 2/7/2012

Comments:

The ECDPH Food and Farm Sustainability Sub Committee strongly support the passage of this bill. Due to the many cutbacks and layoffs within the Quarantine facilities throughout the state we have suffered greatly from potential imported pests other biological problems and keeping this frontline action going is how we will be able to protect and preserve our food security.