

Testimony of The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i
Supporting the Intent of H.B. 2244 Relating to Agriculture Inspectors
House Committee on Agriculture
Wednesday, February 1, 2012, 8:00AM, Rm. 312

The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i is a private non-profit conservation organization dedicated to the preservation of Hawaii's native plants, animals, and ecosystems. The Conservancy has helped to protect nearly 200,000 acres of natural lands for native species in Hawai'i. Today, we actively manage more than 32,000 acres in 10 nature preserves on Maui, Hawai'i, Moloka'i, Lāna'i, and Kaua'i. We also work closely with government agencies, private parties and communities on cooperative land and marine management projects.

The Nature Conservancy supports the intent of H.B. 2244 and its purpose to allow the State Department of Agriculture (HDOA) a means to evaluate items at mainland points of origin before they are sent to Hawai'i. We defer to the HDOA as whether or not it has the authority to contract and deputize out-of-state inspection services, or whether some other method of cooperative agreement can assist in serving the intent of this bill.

Invasive weeds, insects, diseases, snakes, and other pests are one of the greatest threats to Hawaii's economy, agriculture, natural environment, and the health and lifestyle of its people. The HDOA has developed a multi-faceted Biosecurity Program to enhance its invasive species prevention efforts at air and sea ports with more inspectors, more efficient and effective inspection systems and services, improved inspection facilities, and agreements with importers and producers for improved sanitary protocols before items are shipped to Hawai'i.

Evidence from Hawai'i and around the world shows that preventing new pest establishment is exponentially more economical than eradicating a pest or, even worse, controlling it indefinitely once it becomes established. Enhancing the Department of Agriculture's ability to have cargo assessed, and possibly treated, for invasive pests before it ever leaves an out-of-state point of origin will be helpful in preventing new pest arrivals in Hawai'i.

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