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Hearing: Monday March 13, 2017 1:15 p.m.
Senate Committee on Agriculture and the Environment
RE: HB481



Aloha Chair Gabbard and Vice Chair Riviere,

BIISC strongly supports HB481, establishing a pesticide treatment coupon program to support residents in treatment of little fire ant (LFA).

Since May of 2016, BIISC has offered a community support program to educate and train Big Island residents in control of LFA. Our training is targeted at the community level to encourage neighbors to work together and mobilize one another. We have held over 60 community education sessions since May, training over 1,000 Big Island residents, and have used these opportunities to learn about the barriers that residents feel prevent them from successful control of LFA in their communities. **One of the top 3 barriers to effective control of LFA, as identified by residents, was the cost of control products.**

Effective LFA control requires repeated, consistent and well-timed applications of the right product. Often this is difficult for residents to sustain – a missed month or two of treatment due to tight budget can allow ant populations to build up to pre-treatment levels, forcing residents into a never-ending cycle of “chasing” the population numbers. However, in neighborhoods where residents have worked together to plan a sustained approach, we have seen groups of neighbors bring their LFA detections down by as much as 80% in 6-9 months. When zero detections are reached, property owners can enter a maintenance phase where they treat only as necessary to stop any new infestations.

We have worked with the communities to develop methods of cost-sharing and labor-sharing that can reduce treatment costs over a year by as much as 40%. However, to achieve these savings, residents must purchase products in bulk – requiring an initial upfront investment of several hundred dollars, which for many is simply too great of a hurdle.

From November 2016-March 2017, the County of Hawaii (using a HISC grant) has offered \$45 coupons for LFA control products to residents who attend a training program by BIISC or the Hawaii Ant Lab. This has made a significant difference for many of our residents: in some of our poorest communities, treatment became possible only after they were able to combine their coupons and purchase products to get started. The program has been enthusiastically embraced, to the extent that our LFA team has been working nights, weekends, and holidays to meet the demand for the required training!

The residents of the Big Island are motivated, committed, and eager to attack this problem. Their efforts will *save millions of dollars* in future costs for our farmers, schools, businesses and taxpayers across the state. Your support of those efforts through the passage of HB481 will empower more residents and will result in significant current and future benefits to Hawaii.

Thank you for this opportunity, and do not hesitate to contact us for more information.



SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

Monday, March 13, 2017 1:15 PM Room 224
In SUPPORT HB 481 HD1 Relating to Invasive Species

LATE

Aloha Chairman Gabbard and members of the Agriculture and Environment Committee,

On behalf of our 20,000 members and supporters throughout the state, the Sierra Club of Hawai‘i strongly supports HB 481 HD1, which would require the Department of Agriculture to establish a pilot pesticide treatment coupon project and a little fire ant site map for the county of Hawai‘i.

Since being first detected in 1999, the little fire ants (LFA) have spread throughout the state and have been detected on the Big Island, Maui, O‘ahu, Lana‘i and Kaua‘i.¹ LFA are well adapted allowing them to establish colonies and thrive in new locations.² They are able to survive in either natural or human environments and have been found, in the state, to reach population densities of up to 20,000 ants per square meter.³ Once established around a house, populations can grow into the millions.⁴

On the Big Island, in particular, LFA have quickly grown out of control.⁵ In 2014, it was estimated that LFA colonies had been established in at least 4,000 locations throughout the Big Island and were continuing to spread.⁶ Studies have shown that without effective management and assistance, LFA will cost the Big Island about \$140 million in economic damages, \$1.2 billion in mitigation treatments.⁷ In addition to the economic impacts, the study estimates that there will be 390 million human sting incidents and 107 million pet sting incidents.⁸

The negative impacts that these LFA infestations undermine our economy, agriculture, and the quality of life for Hawai‘i’s people.⁹ LFA infestations decrease crop yields and increase costs

¹ Hawaii Ant Lab, *FAQs*, available at: <http://littlefireants.com/FAQ.html>.

² College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources, University of Hawaii at Manoa, *Huge Benefits From Managing Little Fire Ant on the Big Island*, p. 2, Economic Issues (Sept. 2014), available at: <https://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/oc/freepubs/pdf/EI-26.pdf>.

³ *Id.*

⁴ Hawaii Ant Lab, *supra* note 1.

⁵ See CTAHR, *supra* note 2 at p. 2-4.

⁶ *Id.* at 2.

⁷ *Id.* at 3.

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ CTAHR, *supra* note 2 at 2.

for agricultural businesses.¹⁰ People are stung inside and outdoors,¹¹ pets have lost their eyesight due to repeated stinging in their eyes,¹² and skilled agricultural workers have walked away from their jobs due to the poor working conditions created by incessant LFA stinging.¹³ The cumulative negative impact of LFA stinging cannot be overstated. The Legislature must act to ensure everything is done to eradicate this invasive species.

For the reasons mentioned above, the Sierra Club of Hawai‘i feels that this measure is a step in the right direction. It is imperative that the legislature take aggressive action to help eradicate LFA in Hawai‘i.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to provide testimony on this important issue and please support HB 481 HD1.

Mahalo,

Martha Townsend
Director

¹⁰ *Id.* at 2-4; Michael Motoki, Donna J. Lee, Cas Vanderwoude, Stuart T. Nakamoto, and PingSun Leung, *A Bioeconomic Model of Little Fire Ant *Wasmannia auropunctat* in Hawaii*, p. 54-66, (Dec. 2013), available at: <http://manoa.hawaii.edu/hpicesu/techr/186/v186.pdf>.

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² *Id.* at 1; *supra* note 1.

¹³ CTAHR, *supra* note 2 at 2.

LATE

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Monday, March 13, 2017 10:58 AM
To: AEN Testimony
Cc: kbfitmaui@gmail.com
Subject: *Submitted testimony for HB481 on Mar 13, 2017 13:15PM*

HB481

Submitted on: 3/13/2017
Testimony for AEN on Mar 13, 2017 13:15PM in Conference Room 224

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Paul Strauss	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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