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GOVERNOR OF  
HAWAII



SUZANNE D. CASE  
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STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES

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Testimony of  
SUZANNE D. CASE  
Chairperson

Before the House Committees on  
WATER & LAND  
and  
HOUSING

Tuesday, February 9, 2021  
9:15 AM

State Capitol, Via Videoconference, Conference Room 430

In consideration of  
HOUSE BILL 1257  
RELATING TO THE INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL

House Bill 1257 proposes to transfer administration of the interagency Hawai'i Invasive Species Council (HISC) from the Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) to the Department of Agriculture (DOA). **The Department opposes this measure and offers the following comments.**

The Department does not believe any cost savings or efficiencies would accrue from a transfer of the HISC to DOA.

The Department has administered the HISC since it was established by the Legislature in 2003. The authorizing statute, Chapter 194, Hawai'i Revised Statutes, does not provide personnel or operating funds to carry out the activities described in the chapter. The Legislature has, however, provided operating funds to the HISC under LNR 402 in order to support an annual portfolio of projects that are approved by the HISC.

The Department has provided personnel resources to coordinate the activities of the HISC from its Division of Forestry and Wildlife, namely a Wildlife Biologist V position that coordinates the HISC and carries out other, division-specific duties. This position supervises a small team of non-civil service staff provided by the University of Hawai'i, Pacific Cooperative Studies Unit, supported by operating funds. These staff undertake a broad variety of coordinating tasks across the agencies comprising the HISC and engage other, non-State stakeholders. These staff rely on

other personnel across the Department for guidance and for the timely encumbrance of funds for HISC-funded projects.

While the DOA is an important partner in the HISC and has a broad mandate to manage invasive species risks from the agricultural angle, the HISC is critical to Department efforts to prevent, detect, and control invasive species that could have significant negative economic impacts to Hawaii's economy through disruption or invasion of natural systems, and was established in the Department for that purpose.

Shifting the HISC to DOA would also require establishing personnel and operating resources in DOA similar to the system that the Department has utilized since 2003, which would be an inefficient use of limited funding. Rather than recreating the existing system in a different agency, the Department recommends restoring personnel funds for the vacant Wildlife Biologist V position, or allowing the use of LNR 402 operating funds for the position, as described in the Executive Budget, and continuing to work on a multi-agency/organizational basis to further the mission of the HISC through the Department.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this measure.

DAVID Y. IGE  
Governor

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PHYLLIS SHIMABUKURO-GEISER  
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TESTIMONY OF PHYLLIS SHIMABUKURO-GEISER  
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WATER AND LAND  
AND HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2021  
9:15 A.M.  
VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE

HOUSE BILL NO. 1257  
RELATING TO INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL

Chairperson Tarnas, Chairperson Nakamura, and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill No. 1257 that transfers the invasive species council from the Department of Land and Natural Resources to the Department of Agriculture for administrative purposes. The Department appreciates the intent of this bill with strong concerns.

The mission of the Department's Plant Industry Division fundamentally aligns with the State's priorities and objectives for invasive species issues. As such, transferring the Hawaii Invasive Species Council to the Department of Agriculture appropriately allows alignment of the HISC with Plant Industry and invasive agricultural pests, and the Hawaii Interagency Biosecurity Plan. However, the Department does not have sufficient resources to manage and administer the Council, nor does it have the resources to direct the grants and manage projects the Council requires. As such If the committee is inclined to move the measure forward, the Department would require additional positions, resources, and time to transition to support the Hawaii Invasive Species Council and the broader Hawaii Interagency Biosecurity Plan without disruption of service to protect agriculture and the environment.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.