

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

SYLVIA LUKE
Lt. Governor



SHARON HURD
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

DEXTER KISHIDA
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State of Hawai'i
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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**TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

**BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT
AND WATER AND LAND**

**FEBRUARY 12, 2024
2:00 PM
CONFERENCE ROOM 312**

**HOUSE BILL NO. 2672
RELATING TO THE LITTLE FIRE ANTS**

Chair Gates, Vice Chair Kahaloa, and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 2672 relating to little fire ants (LFA). This bill is to protect agricultural crops and workers by appropriating funds to support the Hawaii ant lab (HAL) in mitigating the effects of LFA in the State. The Department offers comments.

LFA is one of the most devastating invasive species for Hawaii's unique natural resources and agricultural economy. Agricultural sectors continue to suffer from the impacts of LFA. There is a lack of tools for our agricultural producers to use to treat and respond to infestations of LFA. This is particularly true for crops like coffee which continue to have a gap in licensed, labeled, and effective products for management of LFA. While existing tools such as the Tango bait matrix is effective, it is a multi-step process for producers and the public to create before treatments can occur. In addition to supporting entities like the HAL, research and development of management tools for the LFA must continue and core funding must be allocated to HDOA and University of

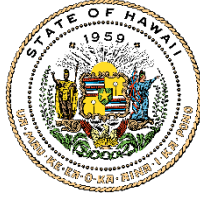


Hawai`i researchers to ensure our agricultural industries have effective, safe, scalable products to control infestations within their crop systems.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important measure.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII'
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA

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DAWN N.S. CHANG
CHAIRPERSON
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MANAGEMENT
CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS
CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES
ENFORCEMENT
ENGINEERING
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

Testimony of
DAWN N. S. CHANG
Chairperson

Before the House Committee on
AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

Monday, January 12, 2024
2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 312 & Via Videoconference

In consideration of
HOUSE BILL 2672
RELATING TO INVASIVE SPECIES

House Bill 2672 appropriates funds to support the Hawai'i ant lab in mitigating the effects of little fire ants in the State. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports this measure provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities indicated in the FY 2025 Executive Supplemental Budget Request.**

The Legislature has declared that invasive species are the biggest threat to Hawai'i's economy, environment, tourism, health, and way-of-life of its residents, and no invasive species encapsulates this devastation better than the little fire ant. This bill would provide desperately needed funding for the Hawai'i Ant Lab (HAL) to fully fund current staff and add new staff on islands that are seeing a serious increase in little fire ant infestations.

HAL was established in 2009 to address the overwhelming need for research and assistance to address and eradicate little fire ant infestations. Effective treatment is labor-intensive and involves surveying, treatment, and long-term monitoring duties. It can take years to scientifically document efforts. In recent years, the Hawai'i Invasive Species Council, through the Department, and the Department of Agriculture helped fund HAL, but current funding levels, including \$500,000 from the legislature in FY24, was not enough to prevent HAL from furloughing their staff this January. This comes at a critical time when infestations on Oahu are on the rise and moving to a place where continued management is the only option. Kauai has two large infestations, one of which is located along a major waterway and will take a dedicated on-island team, which currently does not exist, to manage and control those infestations.

Maui had one of the largest little fire ant infestations in the State, not including Hawai'i Island, in Nahiku, Maui. The site was close to 180 acres running along a major stream, stretching through densely vegetated terrain and private property. With funding provided by HISC and the County of Maui, Maui Invasive Species Committee was able to hire a dedicated little fire ant team that worked with HAL to develop an aerial treatment. After several deployments of the treatment and monitoring missions, this previously infested area is now down to only a few ants. This shows what can be achieved with consistent and adequate resources.

Given the crisis of little fire ant, this funding bill would help address the short and long-term needs to control this invasive pest and develop new tools that could be deployed to manage more widespread infestations and increase extension services to support farmers and industries severely impacted on Hawai'i Island.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this measure.



Food+ Policy Internship 2024

food@purplemaia.org

February 10, 2024

Subject: HB2672 Testimony

Aloha Chair Cedric Asuega Gates and Vice Chair Kirstin Kahaloa and and honorable members of the Committees,

Hawaii Food+ Policy is in strong **SUPPORT** of HB2672, which underscores the critical role of the Hawaii Ant Lab in conducting research and executing eradication efforts against invasive ant species, a challenge that has been exacerbated by persistent funding difficulties. Furthermore, HB2672 prudently recognizes the necessity to surpass the general fund expenditure ceiling to adequately respond to this public interest issue.

The invasive ant species pose a direct threat not only to our agricultural sector by damaging crops and burdening farmers with increased control costs but also to public health and safety. These ants are known for their painful stings, which can lead to allergic reactions, and in some cases, serious medical conditions. The eradication and research efforts led by the Hawaii Ant Lab are vital in mitigating these risks and protecting the wellbeing of our communities, especially vulnerable populations such as children and pets.

Beyond the economic repercussions of allowing these invasive species to proliferate are vast. The agriculture industry, a cornerstone of our economy, faces potential devastation which would, in turn, affect food prices and export revenues. The tourism sector, another pivotal economic pillar of Hawaii, could suffer as the quality of visitor experiences is compromised by these pests.

Moreover, the invasive ant species pose a long-term risk to Hawaii's unique ecosystems. These ants displace native species and disrupt ecological balances, leading to irreversible biodiversity loss. The Hawaii Ant Lab's work in researching and combating these ants is indispensable for the preservation of our environmental heritage.

It is evident that the battle against invasive ants is hindered by financial constraints. The Hawaii Ant Lab's efforts are crucial in this fight, yet the lab has consistently faced challenges in securing adequate funding. HB2672's acknowledgment of the need to exceed the general fund expenditure ceiling is a testament to the recognition that conventional funding mechanisms are insufficient to meet the scale of this challenge. The rapid spread of invasive ants throughout our islands necessitates an immediate and robust response. The situation has reached a critical point where delay or inaction could lead to irreparable damage. Your affirmative action on this bill will demonstrate a commitment to the health, safety, and prosperity of Hawaii's people and the protection of our precious natural resources.

Mahalo for your consideration and for your dedication to serving the public interest of Hawaii and its residents,

Kawika Kahiapo + Hawaii Food+ Policy Team



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February 12, 2024

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

TESTIMONY ON HB 2672
RELATING TO LITTLE FIRE ANT

Conference Room 312 & Videoconference
2:00 PM

Aloha Chair Gates, Vice-Chair Kahaloa, and Members of the Committee:

I am Brian Miyamoto, Executive Director of the Hawai'i Farm Bureau (HFB). Organized since 1948, the HFB is comprised of 1,800 farm family members statewide and serves as Hawai'i's voice of agriculture to protect, advocate and advance the social, economic, and educational interests of our diverse agricultural community.

The Hawai'i Farm Bureau supports HB 2672, which appropriates funds for the Hawaii Ant Lab to support little fire ant mitigation and eradication efforts.

Invasive species have become one of the most devastating problems impacting Hawai'i. Many invasive species are damaging Hawai'i's environment and economy. Agriculture has a vested interest in this matter. Agriculture suffers when invasive species are introduced. Every year, numerous new pests are introduced into the State, such as the coqui frog, coffee berry borer, macadamia felted coccid, little fire ant, coconut rhinoceros beetle, small hive beetle, and varroa mite, to name a few. Control measures take time to develop, leaving farmers and ranchers at risk. This is not consistent with the State's goal of increasing self-sufficiency and sustainability.

HFB recognizes the harm that the little fire ant has caused to farms, businesses, and the quality of life of those affected by the pest. Adequate funding for the Hawai'i Ant Lab funding is critical to support their little fire ant mitigation and eradication efforts.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important matter.



SIERRA CLUB OF HAWAI'I

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

February 12, 2024 2:00 PM Conference Room 312

In SUPPORT of:

HB2104: RELATING TO THE HAWAII INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL

HB2131: RELATING TO THE TWO-LINED SPITTLEBUG

HB2132: RELATING TO INVASIVE SPECIES

HB2133: RELATING TO INVASIVE SPECIES

HB2139: RELATING TO INVASIVE SPECIES

HB2537: RELATING TO INVASIVE SPECIES

HB2644: RELATING TO LITTLE FIRE ANTS

HB2672: RELATING TO LITTLE FIRE ANTS

Aloha Chair Gates, Vice Chair Kahaloa, and Committee Members,

On behalf of our over 20,000 members and supporters, the Sierra Club of Hawai'i **SUPPORTS HB2104, HB2131, HB2132, HB2133, HB2139, HB2537, HB2644, and HB2672**, which will help to mitigate the ongoing and future impacts of invasive pests on our native ecosystems, cultural practices, food security, public health, economy, and the overall quality of life of present and future generations.

Hawai'i's history provides us with a host of lessons regarding the wide-ranging and potentially irreversible damage that invasive species can inflict on our islands and ways of life. Invasive plants and wildlife have overtaken entire watersheds, impacting not just native habitat but also reducing aquifer recharge, increasing our vulnerability to floods and wildfires, and smothering our nearshore reefs and waters with runoff. Parasites and other pests have impacted local food production and increased the use of toxic pesticides on farms and in home gardens, risking both public health as well as threatening stream and nearshore species critical to our aquatic ecosystems. Invasive animals have also extirpated native species, continue to threaten others with outright extinction, and continue to undermine public health by acting as vectors for zoonotic diseases. Most recently, the spread of invasive pests such as the little fire ant, coconut rhinoceros beetle, hala scale, two-lined spittlebug and others will require substantial and long-needed policies and investments over the long-term, to prevent additional and even greater impacts to our islands and our future generations.

Accordingly, the Sierra Club strongly supports the much needed policies and investments contemplated in these measures. More financial support is critical for the Hawai'i Invasive Species Council to fulfill its biosecurity mission; funding for targeted campaigns to address the little fire ant and two-lined spittlebug are critical to preventing the ecological, cultural, agricultural, public health, and economic impacts of these pests; financial support for



businesses and organizations to engage in invasive species control and eradication will engage more of the community in the all-hands-on-deck fight to combat their spread; agricultural invasive species placards will encourage agricultural producers to proactively employ best management practices and other measures to prevent and address invasive species on agricultural lands; and quarantine requirements will help to fill a critical gap in our regulatory toolbox that has allowed the sale of infested plants and other communities – a gap that has likely contributed to the establishment of coconut rhinoceros beetle on O‘ahu, and the ongoing spread of little fire ants across the islands.

Much remains uncertain as we continue to reckon with the consequences of Hawai‘i’s longstanding failure to enact critical biosecurity protections. However, it is certain that much stronger action, including but not limited to the proposals in the aforementioned bills, will be necessary to mitigate or prevent the worst of these and other future impacts to our lives and that of our children and future generations.

Accordingly, the Sierra Club of Hawai‘i respectfully urges the Committee to **PASS** these measures. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify.



LATE

House of Representatives
Committee On Agriculture and Food Systems
Monday, February 12, 2024
2:00 PM Conference Room 312
State Capitol

Testimony in Support of HB2672

Aloha Chair Gates, Vice Chair Kahaloe, and Members of the Committee,

The Coordinating Group on Alien Pest Species (CGAPS) is **in support of HB2672**, *Relating to Little Fire Ants*, which provides funding for the Hawaii Ant Lab (HAL) for fiscal year 2024-2025 to protect agricultural crops and workers by mitigating the effects of little fire ant (LFA) in the State.

As noted in HB2672, there is a serious shortage of agricultural workers in Hawaii, and the painful stings and other health impacts of LFA adversely impact working conditions and the ability to retain these workers in LFA-infested areas. LFA also impacts livestock and can increase sap-sucking plant pests which impact crops. HAL is a world leader in researching the methods and tools for the control and eradication of LFA. HAL also provides extension services to help communities control impacts on their properties on Hawaii island. The funds made available by HB2672 could be used by HAL to develop and refine tools and methods for agricultural producers in LFA-infested areas to decrease impacts to workers, livestock, and crops.

HAL has struggled to secure funding for its critical work and had to furlough and reduce hours for its existing staff. LFA is still spreading on Hawaii Island, is rapidly spreading across Oahu, and there are large infestations that will need significant efforts on Kauai. On Maui, the Maui Invasive Species Committee receives significant support from the County and is able to take the lead on all LFA infestations in the County, but relies on HAL's research, tools, and collaborative help. HAL should be fully funded to at least maintain its current staff to address these newly infested areas while eradication may still be possible, and provide much-needed support to Hawaii Island businesses and residents, not furloughing, cutting hours, or losing staff due to lack of funding.

It is critical that HAL has sufficient funding to staff its operations and continue research on LFA management, including in agricultural areas. The additional funding for HAL proposed in HB2672 will support HAL's activities and allow HAL to retain its current staff and continue its work across the State.

Mahalo for the opportunity to support HB2672 and for consideration of our testimony.

Aloha,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Christy Martin".

Christy Martin
CGAPS Program Manager

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Stephanie Easley".

Stephanie Easley
CGAPS Legal Fellow

HB-2672

Submitted on: 2/10/2024 11:06:40 AM

Testimony for AGR on 2/12/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jacqueline S. Ambrose	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

RELATING TO LITTLE FIRE ANTS.

Appropriates funds to support the Hawaii ant lab in mitigating the effects of little fire ants in the State.

HB-2672

Submitted on: 2/10/2024 1:22:50 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/12/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Keoni Shizuma	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the committee,

I stand in support of HB2672.

Hawaii's ecosystem is being, and has been, devastated by invasive species for the last few decades. Little Fire Ants is one of the worst invasive species to have reached our islands and has the potential to transform the way we live in Hawaii, by limiting our ability to enjoy the outdoors, affecting how we are able to have pets outdoors, and could do irreparable damage to our environment. We need to get this under control on all islands, before it is too late.

Thankfully, the Hawaii Ant Lab has been leading that charge, but they need more staff and funds so they can do more right away! Please support this bill!

These funds are needed to protect our fragile ecosystem and protect our way of life in Hawaii.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Keoni Shizuma

LATE

HB-2672

Submitted on: 2/12/2024 10:44:51 AM

Testimony for AGR on 2/12/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
C. Kauai Lucas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Gates, Vice Chair Kahaloa

Little Fire Ants are not just a nuisance, they are a real threat to livestock, pets, crops, and the ability of farming operations to hire and retain workers. Please pass this bill.

me ka ha'aha'a,

Kauai Lucas

LATE

HB-2672

Submitted on: 2/12/2024 11:55:31 AM
Testimony for AGR on 2/12/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Melody Euaparadorn	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Mahalo for accepting this testimony in favor of passing HB2672. The current lack of funding for the Hawaii Ant Lab comes at a critical time when an increasing number of isolated populations of Little Fire Ants are being identified across the islands. The requested funds will allow continued critical outreach, research, and rapid response to extinguish these outbreaks. I urge the committee to pass HB2672 as these efforts are imperative to prevent Little Fire Ants from spreading throughout our state and wreaking havoc in our agriculture fields, forests, and homes.

HB-2672

Submitted on: 2/12/2024 12:25:27 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/12/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Heather Forester	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Little Fire Ants have been present in Hawaii since at least 1999, and unfortunately, they are here to stay. The need for assistance with prevention and management of this invasive ant species is ongoing on Hawaii Island, and with the exponential increase in detections on Oahu, the need for Hawaii Ant Lab's services are ever growing. Hawaii Ant Lab also collaborates with invasive species committees on the other islands who are also facing the invasion of Little Fire Ants.

Little Fire Ants impact everyone, and if you have them, you cannot dodge their impact without proper management. The Hawaii Ant Lab has been researching this species for 15 years, and has the institutional knowledge to get the job done, correctly and legally. With additional funding, Hawaii Ant Lab can keep their doors open, and employ additional staff to assist the State with this persistent pest.

I support this Bill.