

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

SYLVIA LUKE
Lt. Governor



SHARON HURD
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

DEXTER KISHIDA
Deputy to the Chairperson

State of Hawai'i
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
KA 'OIHANA MAHI'AI
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TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

FEBRUARY 12, 2024
2:00 PM
CONFERENCE ROOM 312

HOUSE BILL NO. 2644
RELATING TO LITTLE FIRE ANT

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 2644. This bill recognizes the Hawaii Ant Lab as the leading organization in addressing little fire ant infestations, with support of the Department of Agriculture, Plant Pest and Disease Control branch; and appropriate funds to support the Hawaii Ant Lab in mitigating the effects of little fire ants in the State. The Department offers the following comments.

Little fire ants are one of the most significant new pests to establish themselves in Hawaii in the past 30 years. When first detected, the Plant Pest Control Branch recognized the potential impact of this species but the Department and partners including USDA, the University of Hawaii, and others, did not have the tools to adequately address this pest. It is for this reason the Plant Pest Control Branch pursued funding which resulted in the creation of the Hawaii Ant Laboratory (HAL). HAL worked closely with staff at the Plant Pest Control Branch to develop novel and now common place control techniques for little fire ants. It is the belief of the Department, some of the core capacity of the program should belong within the Department. The Department has not had entomological specialists, which has been problematic for the Department



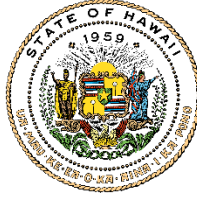
especially when beetles alone have more diversity than birds, reptiles and mammals combined. Ants and other social insects pose unique challenges for research and control as their unique social structures give them profound abilities to adapt to control strategies. For instance, early work in the biocontrol of little fire ant failed because the colony will quarantine elements of the colony that are sick. Ants (not just little fire ants) pose diverse impacts to our agriculture and environment. For instance, ants are the most common source of rejections of exports from Hawaii (not little fire ant but other species). While the Department appreciates the role and functioning of the Hawaii Ant Laboratory, the department similarly believes that ants are serious enough to warrant dedicated, sustained funding to coordinate the diverse needs required for the detection, management, research and control of invasive ant species and the contextual basis of operational knowledge at Federal, state, and local levels to advance our ability to detect, protect, and respond to invasive ant species.

In recognition of this, the Department proposes the following. 1) creation of an exempt entomologist position within the Plant Pest Control Branch to serve as the state's lead on LFA and invasive ant issues in recognition of the specialized background and skills required to lead such an effort; 2) support the development of new facilities for the plant pest control branch to allow rigorous research and development into invasive ants as this critical work was delayed due to a lack of adequate research space until little fire ants became established on Hawaii island; and 3) provide funding to support the Hawaii Ant Laboratory to work in partnership with Plant Pest Control Branch.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this 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
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
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ACTING DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER
AQUATIC RESOURCES
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION
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COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
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, February 12, 2024
2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 312 and Via Videoconference

In consideration of
HOUSE BILL 2644
RELATING TO LITTLE FIRE ANTS

House Bill 2644 recognizes the Hawai'i Ant Lab as the lead organization in addressing little fire ant infestations, with support of the department of agriculture, plant pest and disease control branch. 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.

Managing little fire ants has become a multi-agency effort amongst the Island Invasive Species Committees, Hawai'i Ant Lab, and the Department of Agriculture (DOA). No clear roles or responsibilities have been formalized in this effort. Hawai'i Ant Lab is a project under the University of Hawai'i Pacific Cooperative Studies Unit and has no regulatory authority to enter private property for survey and treatments, conduct inspections, or manage high-risk pathways. They rely solely on voluntary consent to do work on private

property. The DOA does have this regulatory authority and is a critical partner in the management of little fire ant and other pests.

The functions, roles, and authorities of each organization need to delegate where they work and ultimately where they lead efforts. For example, it would make sense for the Hawai'i Ant Lab and the Island Invasive Species Committees to lead efforts in residential areas and the DOA to work with nurseries and other horticulture businesses to ensure they are free of little fire ants and other pests that can be transported on plant products.

In recent years, the Hawai'i Invasive Species Council (HISC), through the Department and the DOA, helped fund HAL. Still, 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 O'ahu are on the rise and moving to a place where continued management is the only option. Kaua'i 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.

Given the crisis of little fire ant, this measure would help address the short and long-term needs to control this invasive pest and clarify roles and responsibilities of the relevant agencies regarding the management of little fire ant.

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



Food+ Policy Internship 2024

food@purplemaia.org

February 10, 2024

Subject: HB2644 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 HB2644, which aims to tackle the critical issue of the rapid spread of little fire ants, an invasive species that has increasingly threatened the biodiversity, public health, and economic stability of our state. This bill acknowledges the severity of the situation by designating the Hawaii Ant Lab, in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture, as the lead organization for addressing and mitigating little fire ant infestations across Hawaii.

The little fire ant represents a significant threat to public health, particularly affecting our most vulnerable populations: children and pets. The sting of these ants can cause painful welts and, in some cases, severe allergic reactions. For children, the risk of encountering these invasive pests is high, turning what should be safe play areas into hazardous zones. Moreover, pets are at high risk as well, with potential for blindness and chronic discomfort. However, the ecological threat posed by little fire ants extends far beyond mere discomfort. These invasive ants are a formidable threat to our native species, disrupting local ecosystems and pushing out indigenous flora and fauna. The balance of our unique Hawaiian ecosystems is at risk. This not only diminishes biodiversity but also undermines the ecological functions that these native species support.

Beyond the environmental and health concerns, the economic implications of unchecked little fire ant infestations are profound. Agriculture, a cornerstone of our economy, suffers as crops are damaged and yields decrease, leading to financial strain on farmers and increased prices for consumers. Moreover, Hawaii's tourism industry, a vital source of revenue for the state, is at risk as the presence of little fire ants detracts from the natural beauty and enjoyment of our islands, potentially leading to a decline in visitor numbers. Property values, too, are negatively affected as infested areas become less desirable, impacting homeowners and the real estate market at large.

The rapid spread of little fire ants across our islands demands immediate and decisive action. HB2644 represents a crucial step forward in this fight, providing the framework and resources necessary for effective management and eradication efforts. By designating the Hawaii Ant Lab and the Department of Agriculture as leaders in this initiative, we ensure a coordinated and scientifically informed approach to tackling this invasive species.

Mahalo for your attention to this critical issue and for your ongoing efforts to protect the interests of Hawaii and its people,

Kawika Kahiapo + Hawaii Food+ Policy Team



COORDINATING GROUP ON
ALIEN PEST SPECIES

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 HB2644

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

The Coordinating Group on Alien Pest Species (CGAPS) is **in support of HB2644**, *Relating to Little Fire Ants*, which recognizes the Hawaii Ant Lab (HAL) as the lead organization in addressing little fire ant (LFA) infestations, with support of the Hawaii Department of Agriculture, Plant Pest Control Branch and appropriates funds to support HAL in mitigating the effects of little fire ants in the State.

LFA are a serious threat to native species, people, and pets, and also threaten agriculture and other outdoor industries. For example, 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 HB2644 could be used by HAL to add funds for additional staff to help in managing infestations, provide critical extension services, and continue to develop and refine tools and methods to manage LFA and other serious ant pests.

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 HB2644 will support HAL's activities and allow HAL to expand its services across the State. Mahalo for the opportunity to support HB2644 and for consideration of our testimony.

Aloha,

Christy Martin
CGAPS Program Manager

Stephanie Easley
CGAPS Legal Fellow



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



SIERRA CLUB OF HAWAI'I

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

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February 12, 2024

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

TESTIMONY ON HB 2644
RELATING TO LITTLE FIRE ANTS

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 provides comments on HB 2644, which recognizes the Hawai'i Ant Lab as the lead organization in addressing little fire ant infestations, with support of the Department of Agriculture, plant pest and disease control branch. Appropriates funds to support the Hawai'i ant lab in mitigating the effects of little fire ants in the State.

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. **We respectfully suggest that HDOA retain control of invasive species programs and be adequately funded and staffed** to accomplish its mandates. Shifting authority from HDOA to the ISCs, the Hawaii Ant Lab, or the applicable county, will present organizational and management problems and should instead be at the discretion of HDOA if it is unable to develop and implement a control or eradication program itself. We believe a better solution would be for HDOA to retain control of its responsibilities, with

the ability to contract other entities at its discretion, on a case-by-case basis, to develop or carry out control programs.

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



HAWAII PEST CONTROL ASSOCIATION

Century Square – 1188 Bishop St., Ste. 1003*Honolulu, HI 96813-3304

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February 12, 2024

LATE

Testimony To: House Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems
Representative Cedric Asuega Gates, Chair

Presented By: Tim Lyons, CAE
Executive Director

Subject: H.B. 2644 – RELATING TO LITTE FIRE ANTS.

Chair Gates and Members of the Committee:

I am Tim Lyons, Executive Director of the Hawaii Pest Control Association and we support this bill.

The Hawaii Ant Lab has done great work in the past, providing research and methodologies regarding little fire ants. This is a very important function, not only for individual citizens but also for the industry.

Based on that, we support this bill and respectfully request your favorable consideration.

Thank you.

HB-2644

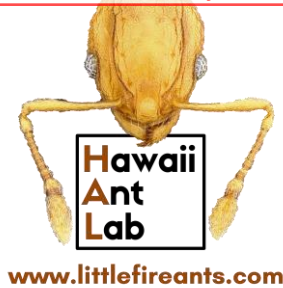
Submitted on: 2/12/2024 10:19:36 AM

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

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Nancy Redfeather | Ka Ohana O Na Pua | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Funding the Hawai'i Ant Lab is critical for continuing research, education, and support for all the communities of Hawai'i in working together to combat the growing threat of LFA. I am treating along my street as LFA moved in with some dumped green waste. This pest is not like any other. It's mission is to take over all other ant species and insect species in it's path and become the dominant species in the ecosystem. This will destroy Hawaii's ability to begin to create more food self-sufficiency, have quality of life now and for generations to come, and limit the amount of tourist dollars spent in the Islands. Please fund HAL at as high a level as possible for the future of the Hawaiian Islands. Mahalo!!

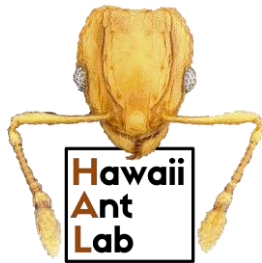


TESTIMONY in Support of HB 2644

Dear Members of the Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems. I write this testimony in support of HB2644, introduced by Representative Kitagawa, that establishes the Hawaii Ant Lab (HAL) as the lead organization for Little Fire Ant (LFA) Response in Hawaii with support by the Hawaii Department of Agriculture (HDOA). At this time, multiple organizations and agencies play a role in LFA response throughout the state; however, it remains unclear who is (or should be) the lead organization and what roles should the other organizations play. This bill is an important first step in addressing such issues. LFA were introduced to Hawaii in the mid 1990's and have been spreading throughout the state ever since. The situation on Oahu has passed the tipping point where we can no longer delay action and please understand that the amount of action put forth to this issue is directly related to the financial investment and commitment levels by the State.

While I strongly support this Bill, there are issues needing upfront consideration and preemptive action on the part of the Legislature. First, the HAL does not hold any regulatory authority. As a project under the University of Hawaii's Pacific Cooperative Studies Unit, we work in cooperation with communities, businesses, and agencies on a voluntary basis and this is unlikely to change. Regulatory authority lies with the HDOA, as it should and it is absolutely imperative that the HDOA is also supported in a way that will further LFA management goals of each island. I am concerned that without the necessary support for the HDOA LFA response, the Department will defer all LFA action to the HAL including response to nurseries and the agriculture industry. For any real progress to be made with regards to LFA management, a multiagency approach is essential. The recent HAR Ch 4-72 revisions will lead to progress by closing gaps in the HDOA's regulatory authority but it also adds to their workload. The State should be mindful about this and prevent another situation where the HDOA can justify inaction.

The second issue at hand is that of stable, recurring funding. The HAL has testified to the need for recurring funding for many years only to receive single year funding time and time again by the State and through competitive grants. This is not a sustainable model for any invasive species management program, especially LFA. I understand that the State cannot fund every worthy cause at full capacity and that competitive grants are necessary to fill gaps. But the "gaps" should not be so large that the HAL is unable to take or maintain meaningful action. Responsibility lies on the State and each county to ensure the ongoing LFA management is properly funded year after year. Otherwise, what's the point of establishing a lead organization



www.littlefireants.com

that has to fight for funding every year against other worthy causes? This “fight for survival” will only negate the progress HB 2644 is trying to achieve if it’s allowed to continue.

Over the past year I’ve seen support for the HAL grow exponentially from past years. This is evident by 4 Bills being introduced during this legislative session to support LFA management. This is very encouraging and hopefully sends a message to your legislative colleagues regarding the importance of and need for this work statewide. I can only hope this support continues to grow for the HAL and all of our partner agencies and organizations to continue this work.

Mahalo for your time and all of your efforts in finding solutions to a difficult problem.

Michelle Montgomery
Manager
Hawaii Ant Lab

HB-2644

Submitted on: 2/10/2024 11:05:32 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.

Recognizes the Hawaii ant lab as the lead organization in addressing little fire ant infestations, with support of the department of agriculture, plant pest and disease control branch. Appropriates funds to support the Hawaii ant lab in mitigating the effects of little fire ants in the State.

HB-2644

Submitted on: 2/10/2024 1:21:58 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 HB2644.

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

HB-2644

Submitted on: 2/10/2024 4:32:44 PM

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

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Jill Tucker | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Please pass this bill so that there can be hope of stopping the infestation before it spreads further. There is no substitution for prevention. Don't let our situation on Windward O'ahu get to the stage it was at in Puna.

Thank you,

Jill Tucker

HB-2644

Submitted on: 2/12/2024 9:49:12 AM

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

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Clarice Olson | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Re: In support of HB2644–

I urge you to support HB-2644. I live in Kaneohe (Kahalu'u) and have had Little Fire Ants (LFA) in my backyard and I know this is not something we want for the rest of Oahu and the other islands.

Before treating my yard, I could only work outside for 30 minutes before the first ants would start biting- this is even with using repellent and wearing long sleeves and long pants. The LFA bite is excruciatingly painful and once they start you have to go inside because they will start to swarm. Imagine if a family is relying on growing their own food, but can no longer work the land due to the presence of Little Fire Ants.

It would be very simple if we only had to worry about getting rid of the LFA in our own yard. The fact is that the ants will spread and can spread rapidly. Once the ants are out in forested areas, it is beyond what can be controlled by homeowners and neighborhood groups. Then it is only a matter of time before the ants reach the other islands, through transport of plant material or other carrier items.

There are solutions that can work if we act now. Let's not wait until the Little Fire Ants have spread all over Oahu and other islands when it will be much more expensive to eradicate. Or worse yet, the ants could spread so much that it is no longer feasible to eradicate them. Therefore I ask your support for HB-2644.

HB-2644

Submitted on: 2/12/2024 9:56:53 AM

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.

HB-2644

Submitted on: 2/12/2024 11:54:08 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 HB2644. 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 HB2644 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.

LATE

HB-2644

Submitted on: 2/12/2024 12:43:17 PM

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

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|--------------|--------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Joseph Wat | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

I strongly support a legislative commitment to consistent and reliable funding for ant-related research and eradication.

These ants are horrible pests, while many folks live with them nobody would choose to have them. Little Fire Ants are on the brink of expansion beyond control... despite the fact that we are superbly well equipped with modern outreach technology, effective pesticides, and GPS. Also, unlike CRB, these ants will not "fly away into the mountains."

If LFA spreads throughout O‘ahu and the rest of the neighbor islands it will be because we "chose" that path through unreliable funding, inaction, and lack of community organizing. I am grateful for all of the momentum that has been built this legislative session. We need to maintain that!

My one suggestion for consideration would be to keep this funding specifically earmarked for LFA treatment and eradication but designate the Hawai‘i Invasive Species Committee as the recipient. Ant Lab operates primarily on O‘ahu and Big Island. Designating HISC as the recipient would allow MISC, KISC, OISC, and others to access this money as ant populations rise and rall throughout the pae ‘āina. HAL will likely still recieve the majority of the funds but this would allow additional flexibility. Especially if the intent is to fund eradication versus research, HISC may be the best recipient.

To reiterate, consistent funding from the legislature is an ESSENTIAL and deeply appreciated step in keeping this terrible pest from becoming widespread. I urge you to pass this measure to ensure our grandchildren’s grandchildren can experience a Hawai‘i that we recognize.