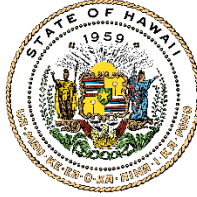


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

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

P.O. BOX 621
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

DAWN N.S. CHANG
CHAIRPERSON
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
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FIRST DEPUTY
DEAN D. UYENO
ACTING DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER
AQUATIC RESOURCES
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES
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 Senate Committee on
WAYS AND MEANS

Friday, April 5, 2024
10:20 AM

State Capitol, Conference Room 211 & Via Videoconference

In consideration of
HOUSE BILL 2644 HOUSE DRAFT 2
RELATING TO LITTLE FIRE ANTS

House Bill 2644 House Draft 2 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 residents' way of life. 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 with a severe increase in little fire ant infestations.

Managing little fire ants has become a multi-agency effort among the Island Invasive Species Committees, Hawai'i Ant Lab, and the Department of Agriculture (DOA). Hawai'i Ant Lab is a project under the University of Hawai'i Pacific Cooperative Studies Unit. It has no regulatory authority to enter private property for surveys and treatments, conduct inspections, or manage high-risk pathways. They rely solely on voluntary consent to do work on private property. The DOA has this regulatory authority and is a critical partner in managing little fire ants and other pests.

Each organization's functions, roles, and authorities guide where it works and where it leads 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, funding levels, including \$500,000 from the legislature in FY24, were insufficient 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 eradication is impossible and continued management is the only option. Kaua'i has two large infestations, one of which is located along a major waterway, and it will take a dedicated on-island team to manage and control those infestations.

Given the little fire ant crisis, this measure would help address the short and long-term needs to control this significant pest.

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

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
1428 South King Street
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Phone: (808) 973-9600 FAX: (808) 973-9613

TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

APRIL 5, 2024
10:20 AM
CONFERENCE ROOM 211 & VIDEOCONFERENCE

HOUSE BILL NO. 2644, HD2
RELATING TO LITTLE FIRE ANTS

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 2644, HD2 relating to little fire ants. 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 so long as it does not impact the budget priorities set forth in the Executive Budget Submittal: 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 (SR-26 \$78,000); 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 (mobile unit \$1 M); and 3) provide funding to support the Hawaii Ant Laboratory to work in partnership with Plant Pest Control Branch (\$500,000).

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Friday, April 5, 2024 at 10:20 a.m.

By

Alison Sherwood, Acting Dean
College of Natural Sciences

And

Michael Bruno, Provost
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

HB 2644 HD2 – RELATING TO LITTLE FIRE ANTS

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i (UH) appreciates for the opportunity to offer a comment and provides a suggested amendment for HB 2644 HD2, which appropriates funds to support Hawai'i Ant Lab in mitigating the effects of little fire ants in the State. UH hopes that the suggested amendment below will provide a clearer understanding of the relationship between the various organizations involved in addressing the issue of little fire ants across the State.

Section 1, page 2, lines 7 to 12, which currently reads as follows:

“Currently, there are numerous organizations involved in addressing little fire ants across the State, including the Hawaii ant lab, pacific cooperative studies unit at the university of Hawaii at Manoa, Hawaii department of agriculture, Hawaii invasive species council, and Oahu invasive species committee.”

The suggested amendments are as follows:

“Currently, there are numerous organizations involved in addressing little fire ants across the State, including the Hawaii ant lab and island specific invasive species committees with the pacific cooperative studies unit at the university of Hawaii at Manoa, Hawaii department of agriculture, and the Hawaii invasive species council~~, and O'ahu invasive species committee~~.”

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important matter.



The Senate
Committee on Ways and Means
Friday, April 5, 2024
10:15 AM Conference Room 211
State Capitol

Testimony in Support of HB2644 HD2

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee,

The Coordinating Group on Alien Pest Species (CGAPS) is **in support of HB2644 HD2, Relating to Little Fire Ants**, which appropriates funds to support the Hawai'i Ant Lab (HAL) in mitigating the effects of little fire ants in the State.

Little fire ants (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. The funds and positions made available by HB2644 HD2 would provide critical support for managing infestations, conducting extension services, and continuing to develop and refine tools and methods to manage LFA and other serious ant pests.

HAL is a world leader on researching and developing the methods and tools for the control and eradication of LFA. As LFA is spreading across the State, this research is needed to support existing control needs and to develop new options for LFA response. HAL also provides extension services to help communities control impacts on their properties on Hawaii Island.

For locations where LFA are not widely established, HAL's staff provides on-the-ground response to control LFA infestations or to support each island's control efforts. To achieve the local eradication of an infestation, at least eight applications of ant bait must be made at intervals over a period of a year. These baits must be placed throughout the affected area, including in trees, a process that most community members cannot meet to achieve local eradication.

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 carrying out successful effort to respond to LFA infestations in the County, but relies on HAL's research, tools, and collaborative help.

HB2644 HD2 will provide funding for HAL to add positions on Oahu, where LFA is rapidly spreading and eradication may still be possible. The bill also provides much-needed support for HAL's community outreach, which is required for a successful LFA control program.

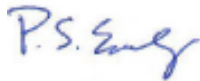
It is critical that HAL has sufficient funding to staff its operations and continue research on LFA management. The additional funding for HAL proposed in HB2644 HD2 will support HAL's activities and allow HAL to add staff positions and continue its work across the State.

CGAPS appreciates that this bill also articulates that this work be conducted by HAL in collaboration with the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture's Plant Pest Control Branch. Mahalo for the opportunity to support HB2644 HD2 and for consideration of our testimony.

Aloha,



Christy Martin
CGAPS Program Manager



Stephanie Easley
CGAPS Legal Fellow



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April 5, 2024

HEARING BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

TESTIMONY ON HB 2644, HD2
RELATING TO LITTLE FIRE ANTS

Conference Room 211 & Videoconference
10:20 AM

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice-Chair Moriwaki, 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 2644, HD2, which 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 inconsistent with the State's goal of increasing self-sufficiency and sustainability.

HFB recognizes the harm that the little fire ant has caused to farms and businesses, as well as 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.

HB-2644-HD-2

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 11:31:35 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/5/2024 10:20:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kevin Faccenda	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this measure the fund several positions, ideally at least 5 full time employees to the Hawai'i and lab to help survey develop new techniques to battle the invasive pest called the little fire ant across the state of Hawai'i. This pest is a manace to agriculture and public health, and will soon become widespread across the island of O'ahu if not promptly managed. This ant, when widespread in addition to added costs to an already strained local agriculture system, will also have negative effects on native birds, insects, and plants as these ants are aggesive predators of other insects, and farm homopterans such as scale bugs and aphids, which in-turn reduce the heath of forest trees. Little fire ant is an existential threat to the pae 'āina.

HB-2644-HD-2

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 11:52:35 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/5/2024 10:20:00 AM

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 Hawai'i 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.

HB-2644-HD-2

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 3:06:59 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/5/2024 10:20:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Beverly Heiser	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Committee Members,

I Strongly Support HB 2644 HD2.

I live on the Windward side where Little Fire Ants have begun to spread. While it has not been detected on our property so far, I believe immediate action is required to stop the spread, and hopefully it's not too late. We have mango, breadfruit, satsuma, guava, and banana trees and two dogs on our property. I dislike using anything except natural pesticides, and only when needed.

We already have a variety of invasive species and plant diseases that can be difficult to control such as white flies, fruit flies, mealy bugs, other ant types and fungal infections. Little Fire Ants can cause blindness in pets.

Food sustainability is important to our island culture and our future. Controlling invasive pests is crucial to farmers and individuals who love to garden and grow different fruits and vegetables. The more invasive species the greater the need to use harmful pesticides.

Please provide your support for HB 2644 HD2.

HB-2644-HD-2

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 8:54:35 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/5/2024 10:20:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sherry Pollack	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Earlier this year little fire ants showed up at the Punahou Carnival. What more do I need to say?

Please pass this important measure. Mahalo!