



JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

LUIS P. SALAVERIA
DIRECTOR

SABRINA NASIR
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM
HAWAII EMPLOYER-UNION HEALTH BENEFITS TRUST FUND
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
Ka 'Oihana Mālama Mo'ohelu a Kālā
P.O. BOX 150
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96810-0150

ADMINISTRATIVE AND RESEARCH OFFICE
BUDGET, PROGRAM PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT DIVISION
FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION DIVISION
OFFICE OF FEDERAL AWARDS MANAGEMENT

TESTIMONY BY LUIS P. SALAVERIA
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS
ON
HOUSE BILL NO. 547

February 5, 2025
9:30 a.m.
Room 325 and Videoconference

RELATING TO THE SPAYING AND NEUTERING OF ANIMALS

The Department of Budget and Finance (B&F) offers comments on this bill.

House Bill No. 547 does the following: 1) establishes the Spay and Neuter Special Fund (SNSF) within B&F to finance spaying and neutering surgery and associated veterinary care to reduce pet overpopulation and the reproduction of free roaming cats; 2) establishes an advisory committee to assist B&F in establishing SNSF disbursement eligibility criteria and procedures; 3) allows taxpayers to contribute \$5 of their income tax refund to be deposited into the SNSF; 4) requires the Directors of Finance for the City and County of Honolulu and Counties of Hawai'i, Kaua'i, and Maui to design and issue a special number plate for registered motor vehicle owners supporting the SNSF; 5) appropriates \$50,000 in general funds for both FY 26 and FY 27 for deposit into the SNSF; and 6) appropriates \$50,000 in special funds out of the SNSF for both FY 26 and FY 27 for the purposes of the SNSF.

B&F strongly believes that it is not the appropriate agency to administer the SNSF and its related program functions. B&F does not possess the required subject-matter expertise on spaying and neutering animals or any other related veterinary services as

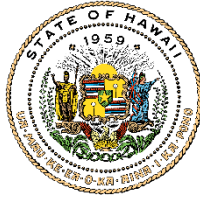
these subject areas are outside of the purview of the department. Further, with the ongoing statewide financial management replacement project, B&F staff are fully engaged and committed to working on the project and doing its regular work; therefore, additional staff and funding would be necessary to administer the SNSF.

B&F recommends that funds be appropriated directly to the counties instead because they have historically been responsible for animal control functions. The counties can then allocate these funds to entities best able to perform the desired services.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

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

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



**STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAI'I
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
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT

RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE
FIRST DEPUTY

CIARA W.K. KAHANE
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 House Committees on
AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS**

**Wednesday, February 5, 2025
09:30 AM**

State Capitol, Conference Room 325 and Via Videoconference

**In consideration of
HOUSE BILL 547
RELATING TO THE SPAYING AND NEUTERING OF ANIMALS**

House Bill 547 establishes the Spay and Neuter Special Fund to reduce pet overpopulation and the reproduction of free-roaming cats, and various revenue and fundraising sources for the special fund. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) provides the following comments.**

Feral cats are a significant threat to Hawai'i's endangered forest birds, seabirds, and other native species. The Department is mandated to protect and manage Hawai'i's natural resources, including its native bird populations, and trap-neuter-return (TNR) has not been shown to be an effective method to reduce feral cat populations.

The Department controls invasive predators in sensitive habitats. Reducing pet overpopulation and free-roaming cats would benefit both cats and wildlife. If a spay and neuter program could decrease the number of unwanted animals, it would benefit wildlife populations. Still, the Department does not know if this program would be effective.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this measure.

JOSH GREEN M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF TAXATION

Ka 'Oihana 'Auhau

P.O. BOX 259

HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

PHONE NO: (808) 587-1540

FAX NO: (808) 587-1560

TESTIMONY OF
GARY S. SUGANUMA, DIRECTOR OF TAXATION

TESTIMONY ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:

H.B. No. 547, Relating to the Spaying and Neutering of Animals

BEFORE THE:

House Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems

DATE: Wednesday, February 5, 2025

TIME: 9:30 a.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 325

Chair Kahaloe, Vice-Chair Kusch, and Committee Members:

The Department of Taxation (DOTAX) offers the following comments regarding H.B. 547 for your consideration.

Section 2 of H.B. 547 establishes a new "Spay and Neuter Special Fund." Section 3 amends chapter 235, Hawaii Revised Statutes, to establish a source of funding through a new income "check-off" option, allowing taxpayers to designate refund deposits for the program. Individual taxpayers with a refund of \$5 or more, or joint married taxpayers with a refund of \$10 or more, may designate \$5, or \$5 per person, respectively, to be deposited into the special fund.

The bill authorizes the director of taxation to revise tax return forms. As with other existing check-off boxes, if no initial designation was chosen, taxpayers will be allowed to amend a return to choose a designation within 20 months and ten days after the due date for the original return for that taxable year. A designation is nonrevocable once made.

This measure is applicable for tax years beginning after July 1, 2025, with section 3 pertinent to the check-off boxes being effective for taxable years beginning after December 31, 2024. DOTAX can administer the measure with the current effective date for Section 3.

If adopted, DOTAX requests that the proposed check-off option proposed in Section 3 be added as a new subsection to section 235-102.5, HRS, which already authorizes other “check-off” options for income tax purposes.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.

HB-547

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 10:43:59 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/5/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marian Hussenbux	Animal Interfaith Alliance in Britain	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

HB547 establishes the Spay and Neuter Special Fund to reduce overpopulation of companion animals and the reproduction of free-roaming cats, and various revenue and fundraising sources for the special fund. We join Hawaiian Humane and the Hawai'i Animal Welfare Association, which represents the largest animal welfare organizations in each county in strongly supporting this Bill. This measure allows for grants to organizations that spay/neuter companion animals and/or Free-Roaming cats, supporting the critical goal of reducing overpopulation across the board.

We beg to support this important Bill.

HB-547

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 11:21:56 AM

Testimony for AGR on 2/5/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cathy Goeggel	Animal Rights Hawai'i	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

We strongly support HB547!

HB-547

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 1:56:53 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/5/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stefanie A Delmont	ADVOCATS INC	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairwoman Kahaloa and Committee members. My testimony is in support of HB 547. My name is Stefanie Delmont, I live in Kailua Kona, Hawai'i Island, and am testifying as President of AdvoCATS, Inc a 501C3non profit founded in March 1999. Since our founding we have spayed/neutered over 30,000 free roaming aka community cats. After being neutered cats are returned to their colonies or where they had been living and volunteers continue to provide food, water and medical care for cats' lifetime..When we have room at a clinic we open up spaces for our free spay/neuter to community members who are on a waitlist for this service. Using this TNRM (trap/Neuter/Return to where trapped and Maintain continue providing food, water medical attention) one would think most of the free roaming cats would be gone or in elder cat retirement communities. The lack of affordable spay/neuter options means our colonies are too often overwhelmed with new arrivals from people who couldn't or didn't get their animals "fixed" and drop them (and kittens) off where they know "feeders" will provide food. This is not a viable solution. Providing spay/neuter funds and support for both domestic/owned and free roaming/community cats benefits the community and the cats.

AdvoCATS Mission is to have fewer, healthier and happier cats for the benefit of the cats, the community and the environment . HB547 is a strong move in the right direction by providing grants to support spay/neuter for domestic and community cats. AdvoCATS,Inc. as is true for many other spay/neuter groups raises its own money fromn the private sector to pay for its work and to provide it free for the community.

Thank you for your time, attention and thought on this important topic. Much more to say but this is me being consise.

Stefanie Delmont - AdvoCATS Inc. President



Hawaiian Humane Society

People for animals. Animals for people.

Date: Feb. 3, 2025

To: Chair Rep. Kirstin Kahaloa
Vice Chair Rep. Matthias Kusch
and Members of the Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems

Submitted By: Stephanie Kendrick, Director of Community Engagement
Hawaiian Humane Society, 808-356-2217

RE: Testimony in strong support of HB 547:
Relating to the Spaying and Neutering of Animals
Wednesday, Feb. 5, 2025, 9:30 a.m., Room 325 & Videoconference

On behalf of the Hawaiian Humane Society, thank you for considering our strong support for House Bill 547, which establishes the Spay and Neuter Special Fund to reduce pet overpopulation and the reproduction of Free-Roaming cats and authorizes various revenue and fundraising sources for the special fund.

This measure is designed to address an urgent need in our community. We have more pet animals than families adopting pets. Puppies, which were historically rare among the wide range of animals to be found at local shelters, are now regularly being surrendered entire litters at a time. Economic challenges and housing insecurity force families to give up beloved pets. The Hawaiian Humane Society is at the forefront of taking a multifaceted, community centered approach to these issues and one undeniable need is for greater access to low-fee and no-fee spay neuter services.

Due to their costs of doing business, private veterinary clinics are no longer able to provide low-cost spay neuter at the levels they once did. Local nonprofits have stepped up to help, but they are under resourced. This bill is designed to help them help our communities.

Convenient and affordable access to spay/neuter is the best way to prevent pet overpopulation. Due to business costs, the number of clinics offering low-fee spay neuter on O'ahu has fallen from more than 20 to five. One of them, Hawaiian Humane's Ginny Tiu Community Spay/Neuter Center in Mō'ili'ili, is regularly booked four months



Hawaiian Humane Society

People for animals. Animals for people.

in advance. Our Spay/Neuter Center in 'Ewa Beach has yet to open due to lack of staffing and inadequate funding.

Decades of education around the importance of spay/neuter for improving the health and longevity of animals, reducing nuisance behaviors and curbing pet overpopulation have borne fruit. Demand for services at our community spay/neuter center since its opening in 2018 suggests that most people want to do the right thing for their pets. In a 2024 survey of O'ahu households, 81 percent of pet dogs were reported to be spayed/neutered, as were 68 percent of pet cats. Of those who reported their pets were not spayed/neutered, 30 percent of cat owners and 17 percent of dog owners said it was because the cost was too high.

If we are going to reduce the suffering caused by pet overpopulation, better access to affordable spay/neuter services is needed statewide. We have nonprofits in place eager to do that work with funding support.

The ability to offer no-fee spay/neuter for Free-Roaming cats has had incredible impact on O'ahu. According to the 2024 survey conducted for Hawaiian Humane by Ward Research, the spay/neuter rate for Free-Roaming cats jumped from 38 percent in 2018 to 70 percent in 2024 according to the residents who feed cats they do not consider to be their own. Over those six years, the City and County of Honolulu invested resources into the Feline Fix program, which allows participating clinics to offer no-fee spay/neuter for Free-Roaming cat caregivers. The spay/neuter fund created by this bill could enable similar progress across our state.

There is a clear public interest in reducing the number of unwanted pets and the population of Free-Roaming cats. It is time for the state to join the counties and private donors in supporting this work. Please pass HB547 and support the organizations working tirelessly to curb overpopulation.

Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-547

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 8:48:06 AM

Testimony for AGR on 2/5/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ted Bohlen	Hawaii Reef and Ocean Coalition	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hawai'i Reef and Ocean Coalition **SUPPORTS** funding for spaying and neutering cats. Young cats can spread toxoplasmosis, which can be fatal to endangered monk seals and other marine mammals.

Please pass funding for spaying and neutering cats.

Mahalo!

Hawai'i Reef and Ocean Coalition (by Ted Bohlen)

TAX FOUNDATION OF HAWAII

735 Bishop Street, Suite 417

Honolulu, Hawaii 96813 Tel. 536-4587

SUBJECT: INCOME TAX; Spay and Neuter Special Fund, Income Tax Check Off

BILL NUMBER: HB 547, SB 1023

INTRODUCED BY: HB by GARRETT, AMATO, CHUN, GARCIA, GRANDINETTI, IWAMOTO, KAHALOA, KAPELA, KILA, KITAGAWA, LEE, M., LOWEN, MARTEN, MATSUMOTO, MIYAKE, MORIKAWA, OLDS, PERRUSO, POEPOE, REYES ODA, SOUZA, TAKAYAMA, TAKENOUCI, TARNAS, TODD; SB by LEE, C., RHOADS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Establishes the Spay and Neuter Special Fund to reduce pet overpopulation and the reproduction of free-roaming cats and various revenue and fundraising sources for the special fund.

SYNOPSIS: Adds a new section to chapter 143, HRS, to establish a spay and neuter special fund ("Fund). Moneys in the special fund shall be expended to reduce pet overpopulation and the reproduction of free-roaming cats by providing spaying and neutering surgery and associated veterinary care; provided that the uses and expenditures of moneys in the special fund shall follow the eligibility criteria established by a new advisory committee created by the bill.

Section 3 of the measure adds a new section 235-____, HRS, to allow an income tax check-off for \$5 to be deposited into the Fund, or for a joint return each spouse may designate \$5.

Adds a new section 249____, HRS, providing special number plates for motor vehicles supporting the spay and neuter special Fund. Fees charged for the plates will be deposited into the Fund established by this measure.

An appropriation out of the general fund of \$50,000, or so much thereof as may be necessary, for fiscal year 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 shall be deposited into the special Fund.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2025; provided Section 3 shall apply to taxable years beginning after December 31, 2024.

STAFF COMMENTS: This bill creates a new special fund to reduce pet overpopulation and the reproduction of free-roaming cats. The fund is fed by legislative appropriations, \$5 State income tax refund designations, and fees from special license number plates. The fund is to be administered by the Department of Budget and Finance.

Special funds are pots of money that exist for a specific purpose and largely bypass the legislative appropriation process. The existence of hundreds of these special funds has often confounded those who seek answers to simple questions like "How much money does the State have?"

Our Legislature is supposed to be the steward of all state moneys, but special funds make it very easy to lose track of where the money is and how it is being spent. Departments are supposed to tell the Legislature if they have special funds and how much is in them, but let's just say they don't

always. Recently, in Report No. 20-01, the State Auditor took DBEDT to task for failing to report \$6.5 million in non-general fund moneys. DBEDT's response? Just that they'll "take corrective action." Not even a "Whoops! We screwed up and promise to do better next time!" This followed closely on the heels of Report No. 19-16, where the Auditor found that \$1.04 million in non-general fund moneys administered by the Attorney General wasn't reported. That department responded that they "shall establish procedures to assure required reports are issued." Is it any wonder that it's getting harder and harder to follow the money and rein in government spending?

Perhaps as the result of the foregoing concerns, the Legislature has itself established criteria for when a special fund may be maintained (HRS section 37-52.3). The criteria for a special fund are:

(1) Serves a need, as demonstrated by:

(A) The purpose of the program to be supported by the fund;

(B) The scope of the program, including financial information on fees to be charged, sources of projected revenue, and costs; and

(C) An explanation of why the program cannot be implemented successfully under the general fund appropriation process;

(2) Reflects a clear nexus between the benefits sought and charges made upon the program users or beneficiaries or a clear link between the program and the sources of revenue, as opposed to serving primarily as a means to provide the program or users with an automatic means of support that is removed from the normal budget and appropriation process;

(3) Provides an appropriate means of financing for the program or activity that is used only when essential to the successful operation of the program or activity; and

(4) Demonstrates the capacity to be financially self-sustaining.

Of these, at least two of the criteria are violated because there is no nexus between the purpose (reducing the feral cat population) and the source of revenue (income tax checkoffs and license plate fees), and because there is no indication that the proposed fund can be financially self-sustaining. Establishing this special fund is inappropriate, as is the proposed method of financing the fund.

Additionally, in the long run the cost of administering the income tax checkoff merely siphons resources that should otherwise be used for providing needed public services. If lawmakers believe certain programs are of great importance, then they can prioritize those programs through the appropriations process. With the Hawaii tax burden already so heavy, why should taxpayers turn any more of their hard-earned dollars over to government? What lawmakers also do not recognize is that by creating these checkoffs, they add to the cost of administering the law, a cost which steals funds from other programs including those enumerated for a checkoff designation.

Digested: 2/3/2025

HB-547

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 12:46:59 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/5/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sylvia Dolena	Aloha Animal Advocates and Pele Lani Farm LLC	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

SUPPORT HB547 FOR SPAY/NEUTER FOR ALL CATS: PETS, FREE-ROAMING, LOST, ABANDONED, STRAY CATS, COMMUNITY CATS, COLONY CATS AND FERAL CATS WITHOUT THE RESTRICTION OF NOT ALLOWING THEM BACK INTO THEIR LOCATION/ ENVIRONMENT.

#1 CAUSE OF NATIVE BIRD EXTINCTION IS THE DISEASE-CARRYING MOSQUITO.

#2 CAUSE OF NATIVE BIRD EXTINCTION IS LOSS OF HABITAT DUE TO OVER-DEVELOPMENT AND POLLUTION BY HUMANS.

3 CAUSE IS PREDATORS WHICH ARE TREE RATS, MONGOOSE, DOGS, FERAL CATS, NOT COLONY CATS ETC.

MAHALO FOR YOUR SERVICE

4 February 2025
BIISC
23 E Kawili St
Hilo, HI 96771
biisc@hawaii.edu



Attn: House Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems
RE: HB547

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

The Big Island Invasive Species Committee would like to express strong support for HB547, which establishes the Spay and Neuter Special Fund. In Hawai‘i, as in many other island environments, cats are a very destructive invasive species that pose a significant threat to our native wildlife. Many of our native endangered animals, found nowhere else in the world but here, are directly threatened by the presence of cats on the landscape. Cats prey on vulnerable native birds and spread diseases like toxoplasmosis, which has already contributed to the deaths of several nēnē and Hawaiian monk seals.

On Hawai‘i Island, many low-income and working-class families would greatly benefit from improved access to spay/neuter surgery for their family pets. Pet overpopulation has been a severe issue on our island for decades. Thanks to the good work of Hawai‘i Island Humane Society (HIHS) and other animal welfare organizations, the demand for spay/neuter has increased, but unfortunately, the supply has not.

We believe that the key to ending the problem of unwanted cats is to “turn off the tap” – stop the flow at its source, sterilizing all pet cats and dogs and encouraging that these domestic pets remain where they belong, in a household. Establishing the Spay and Neuter Special Fund as outlined in HB547 will play a vital role in humanely addressing this issue and reducing the number of free-roaming cats, thereby protecting both our native wildlife and our communities.

We urge you to support HB547 in order to protect native wildlife in Hawai‘i and help address the urgent issue of pet overpopulation.

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

Franny Kinslow Brewer
Program Manager
fbrewer@hawaii.edu
(808) 933-3340

HB-547

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 2:21:30 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/5/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Theresa M Thompson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB 547 RELATING TO THE SPAYING AND NEUTERING OF ANIMALS.

Mahalo,

Theresa Thompson

HB-547

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 5:54:43 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/5/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
joanna p milo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I agree

HB-547

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 6:40:01 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/5/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lois Crozer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please pass this bill to help with spay/neutering of stray cats and how to fund this. I wholeheartedly think we need to do much much more when it comes to taking care of unwanted strays. They are a danger to wildlife and it's not humane. They were bred to be loved and in homes. They don't have the capacity to fend for themselves. They are not wild animals.

HB-547

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 10:30:20 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/5/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stephanie McLaughlin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this important bill that will help Hawaii's animals.

HB-547

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 3:49:40 AM

Testimony for AGR on 2/5/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jennifer Chiwa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Representative Kahaloa, Vice Chair Representative Kusch and Members of the Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems.

Please vote for HB 547, which I strongly support, to reduce the overpopulation of pets and free-roaming cats.

Mahalo.

Jennifer Chiwa

Makiki

HB-547

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 5:08:56 AM

Testimony for AGR on 2/5/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Melanie Kim	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill which will create a fund through various resources and fundraising to support spaying and neutering and therefore provide a long term solution to Hawaii's overpopulation of stray animals. Please support this bill

HB-547

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 10:49:55 AM

Testimony for AGR on 2/5/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Andrew Evans	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Kirstin Kahaloa and Agriculture Committee,

My name is Andrew Evans and I work in conservation, habitat restoration, and the protection of native and endangered species on the windward side of O'ahu. As one of many conservation professionals in our community, I urge you to support HB547 and continue to pursue the efforts to address the issue of free-roaming cats and other invasive predators on our islands.

We've already lost so many species of our endemic and unique flightless birds over the history of our islands and their settlement. Hard-to-imagine birds like toothed ducks, stilt owls, rails, kiwi-looking ibises, and geese all used to fill our ecosystems with their unique roles. What few native lowland birds we have left are still under pressing threat by loss of habitat, degradation of habitat via invasive species and human use, but most of all the persisting threat of predators. Each report of a predated bird or chick is a gut-punch to our conservation community. New Zealand, which has similarly unique and vulnerable bird biodiversity has recently made bold legislation to completely eliminate wild non-native mammals, and we need to follow suit. This bill will put us on that necessary path.

I urge you to pass HB547 and give Hawaii a bold move in favor of its indigenous inhabitants.

Thank you for your time and your continued efforts,

Andrew Evans

HB-547

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 5:37:01 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/5/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Serena Stefanic-Phillip	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in support of Bill HB547.

HB-547

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 11:25:00 AM

Testimony for AGR on 2/5/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jane E Arnold	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support HB547. I volunteer for Hawaiian Humane Society and for Catfriends, both of which offer low-cost spay/neutering of free-roaming cats. A recent survey of Oahu residents by the Humane Society found that the vast majority of those surveyed support TNR (trap/neuter/return) and spaying/neutering of unowned cats. This has been shown to be the most effective way to control the free-roaming cat population. It works much better than killing these cats. Every female cat that is spayed prevents 1000 cats from being born in the next ten years. And because TNR controls the cat population, it benefits wildlife. However, at present there is a shortage of appointments for low-cost spay/neuter surgeries. Funding is part of the problem, and this bill would address that.

Jane E Arnold

1763 Iwi Way

Honolulu, HI. 96816

HB-547

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 4:54:36 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/5/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Taurie Kinoshita	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To the Honorable Committee,

I am writing in very strong support of HB547.

A Spay and Neuter Special Fund is the only humane answer to reducing pet overpopulation and the reproduction of free-roaming cats.

Allowing grants to organizations that spay/neuter pet animals and/or Free-Roaming cats, supports the critical goal of reducing overpopulation across the board.

Please pass this crucial measure and its companion, SB1023.

Sincerely,

Taurie Kinoshita

February 2, 2025

Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems
Representative Kirstin Kahaloa, Chair
Representative Matthias Kusch, Vice Chair

RE: HB 547, Relating to the Spaying and Neutering of Animals

Dear Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems,

As a practicing veterinarian in Hawaii dedicated to animal health and conservation of native wildlife, I am writing to express my opposition to HB 547 as written. While I am grateful for the support of so many legislators in desiring to address our animal overpopulation crisis and reduce the free-roaming cat population, I am concerned that use of these special funds for popular “trap-neuter-release” (TNR) programs will be ineffective in reducing these populations and protecting native wildlife.

While there are conflicting published studies and data regarding the effectiveness of TNR programs, most scientific reviews and mathematical models of population growth support the conclusion that TNR is ineffective in decreasing free-roaming populations in real world situations. The failure of this approach is multifactorial: high breeding frequency and large litter sizes, lower actual rates of trapping and sterilization than necessary to stop population growth, overabundance of food provided to free-roaming colonies, and continual abandonment of unwanted pet cats. Any successful population reduction with TNR programs has been attributed primarily to concurrent adoption and/or euthanasia of over 50% of the estimated colony population.

Multiple national and international organizations do not support TNR as an effective method of managing free-roaming cat populations, including the American Association of Wildlife Veterinarians, the National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians, the International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council, The Wildlife Society, the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, PETA, and the American Bird Conservancy.

The negative health impacts of free-roaming cats on native wildlife are especially poignant in Hawaii due to our unique native biodiversity that is threatened by increasing environmental pressures. Native birds such as honeycreepers, nene, and alala, and marine mammals such as monk seals and spinner dolphins are increasingly at risk from either direct predation or indirect spread of disease such as toxoplasmosis which is only spread by infected cats.

Additionally, free-roaming cat colonies are often afflicted with infectious diseases such as upper respiratory viruses, leukemia and immunodeficiency viruses, internal and external parasites, and ringworm, which lead to chronic health issues and poor quality of life for affected animals. TNR programs do not focus on finding permanent homes for cats or improving the quality of life for cats that are re-released, and can inadvertently increase cat abandonment rather than encouraging responsible pet ownership or surrender of unwanted pets to shelter or rescue groups.

As there are multiple introduced bills regarding spay/neuter special funds before the legislature this session, I ask that you strongly consider amending this bill with language from HB 364 to ensure public funds are used toward effective sterilization and population control programs that restrict re-release of sterilized animals. Without clear guidelines on how these funds will be used, please OPPOSE HB 547 as written. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. Please contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Jill Yoshicedo, DVM

HB-547

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 7:30:46 AM

Testimony for AGR on 2/5/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Bill Dixon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

HB547 provides much-needed tools to reduce pet overpopulation and the reproduction of free-roaming cats. Specifically, it closes a gap in state law to provide money for spay/neuter programs for both pet and feral cats. The expanded programs will reduce the need to euthanize unwanted cats and will protect native birds from attack by free-roaming cats. Both the Hawaiian Humane Society and the Hawaii Animal Welfare association strongly support this commonsense measure. I urge the committee to do the same and advance this bill.

HB-547

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 10:19:36 AM

Testimony for AGR on 2/5/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carolyn Isono Grapard	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I fully support HB 547. I am a volunteer who works mainly with dog and cat rescue on Hawaii Island. We need to stop the cycle of proliferation of cats and dogs in our communities. Access to spay/neuter services is critical to this effort. Too many animals are subject to injury, illness and starvation without effective population control. This has a profound impact on our neighborhoods confronted with this situation. There are some kind-hearted souls who feed and tend to the suffering but the numbers are overwhelming for many.

Melissa Pavlicek
1099 Alakea Street, Suite 2530
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

February 5, 2025

House Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems
Hawai'i State Legislature
Via Electronic Submission

Re: Support for HB 547

Aloha Chair Kahaloe, Vice Chair Kusch, and members of the Committee!

My name is Melissa Pavlicek and I am writing to support House Bill 547 which:

- Establishes a statewide special fund for pet population control with multiple funding sources; and
- Forms an advisory committee to manage the fund; and
- Harnesses the commitment of volunteers across the state who are willing to trap cats for spay/neuter services; and
- Aims to reduce pet overpopulation and the number of Free-Roaming cats statewide.

I am also concerned about what could happen if this bill is not adopted, such as continued pet population growth, higher euthanasia rates, and Increased strain on animal welfare resources.

As a long-time Hawaiian Humane Society volunteer and board member, and a resident of Oahu, I believe that this bill would be an important step forward for our community.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 547.

HB-547

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 11:28:52 AM

Testimony for AGR on 2/5/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lee Cuccia	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I just want to write in support of this bill. Spay/neuter is an integral part of humanely controlling animal populations. Offering affordable/free options is so very important to maximize the spay and neuter piece. Mahalo.

HB-547

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 3:35:45 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/5/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carole R. Richelieu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strong support of grants to organizations that spay/neuter pet animals and/or Free-Roaming cats, supporting the critical goal of reducing overpopulation

HB-547

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 5:51:27 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/5/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Renee Rabb	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Mahalo for the opportunity to add my very strong support for HB 547 by Rep. Garrett, which creates a spay and neuter fund for pets and free-roaming cats. Since the revenue comes from the sale of special license plates and from state income tax check-off, the fund is voluntary.

The state has a cat overpopulation problem. I am currently fostering cats in lower Puna, working as a volunteer with Action4Animals on Big Island. Our model is adoption as the optimal outcome for abandoned cats and kittens. All the animals we foster are spayed or neutered prior to adoption. We depend on the medical services that organizations like PetFix and Good Karma provide for us, so that we can match people and pets without running the risk of adding to cat overpopulation.

HB 547 would be a great benefit for the environment, for neighborhoods, and for the cats themselves.

Renee Rabb

Keaau, HI 96749

HB-547

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 7:43:56 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/5/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Vivian S. Toellner	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha, My name is Vivian S. Toellner, from the eastside of the Island of Hawai'i. Funds are needed for the free / low cost Spay Neuter Clinics held by volunteer nonprofits here on the Big Island of Hawai'i. Having volunteered at **over 100** cat clinics in the Puna community, I know this is a wise use of our tax dollars. Just this past Sunday, PetFix Big Island fixed 160 cat. Yes, there are that many cats, clearly the community wants and benefits from this service.

I too love our native birds and animals and want us to increase their safety with this spay neuter bill. Hopefully people will understand how spay neutering is the most cost effective and publicly supported method to reduce feline numbers. If other methods, such as round up and kill worked, we would not be discussing this problem today.

I am so pleased to see that this bill includes Trap Neuter Return Managed - TNRM cats, and addresses only the humane reduction of the pet population. However, the \$50,000 of State funds in the bill is woefully low. Each high-volume low cost spay neuter clinic in Hawai'i needs this \$50,000. I plead for that figure to be raised to \$500,000 to make a real difference now! The problem grows exponentially the longer we wait.

Please support the humane reduction in animal overpopulation. The veterinarians, vet techs, volunteers, pet owners, TNRM caretakers, all are supporting spay/neuter with their long hours of community work and donations.

Also, I would like to see the Bill to stipulate that volunteer 501c3 nonprofits that provide no cost / low cost spay/neuter services are the organizations eligible for these funds. As most veterinary businesses charge well over \$200 for just one spay!

The Veterinary advisory board representative needs to be an experienced high volume sterilization surgeon. I would also like to see the advisory committee include an active spay neuter advocate from each island. Either as a voting or nonvoting member and without expense reimbursement. These people truly have an ACTIVE INTEREST in the humane method of animal overpopulation here in Hawai'i.

The reimbursement of advisory committee members should be limited to a low percentage, to ensure the funds are truly used as intended. The annual report and other information should be public information and easily available.

Special number plate design should be kept simple. A paw print with the words "Spay Neuter" is enough and no design fee paid. Are these fundraising fees in line with the other special license plates offered by the State? Again, keep expenses low so funds are spent on spay neuter surgeries.

With additional funding and a few changes, as mentioned, this Bill would be great for Hawai'i. Please realize the magnitude of this problem. We need to spay neuter every cat we can get our hands on. This is no joke, so please do not euthanize this bill. I urge you to support this bill with amendments.

Most Sincerely, thank you for your time and Mahalo for allowing me to submit testimony.

HB-547

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 6:38:38 AM

Testimony for AGR on 2/5/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lynn Morgenroth	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I wholeheartedly support this bill. As a taxpayer I support establishing a Spay and Neuter Special Fund to reduce pet overpopulation and the reproduction of free-roaming cats and various revenue and fundraising sources for the special fund. This is long overdue. This is at least a first step in showing this state actually lives with aloha to all God's creatures. They did not ask to be homeless, show some compassion instead of cruelty.

HB-547

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 8:40:29 AM

Testimony for AGR on 2/5/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tania Chong	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support HB547 to humanely reduce the overpopulation of cats.

Downtown Honolulu

HB-547

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 9:23:07 AM

Testimony for AGR on 2/5/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Natalie Watts	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello, my name is Natalie Watts and I support this bill. Throughout my community of Ewa Beach, multiple free-roaming cat colonies lead to overpopulation, risks to wildlife, and disease. Through the passing of this bill, the control of the free-roaming cat population would become possible. Without the implementation of this bill, the animal population will continue to grow and continue to exacerbate the risks associated with animal overpopulation, such as risks to wildlife, disease, high euthanasia rates, and a strain on animal welfare resources.

HB-547

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 12:51:49 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/5/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Greg "Pu'uwai Aloha" Baker	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Introduction

1. **Who Am I.** My name is Greg “Pu’uwai Aloha” Baker, a resident of 23 plus years of the Big Island of Hawai’i, Puna district, in Kalapana & Kaimu. I am a very lucky ha’ole mainlander who became close friend of Punaikeoneone Keli’iho’omalua and his father, Uncle Robert Keli’iho’omalua and the entire extended ohana that included the following; Ka’awaloa, Kealoha, Kuahiwinui, Kahaloa, Quihano, Ku’uamo’o, Kaho’okaulana, and more (and yes, I know how to say these names too which is a bit of work to master).

My love for everything that is Hawa’i’ has grown during my time here and over the past five years my awareness of the challenges our community cats and dogs face is both tragic and deeply sad. I choose to make a difference by using my developed critical thinking from having a degree in Accounting and an MBA in Healthcare spending the past ten years in corporate finance. I combine my love and passion for helping these animals with a strong foundation in science-based decision making and best practice approaches. I am deeply involved in the cat and dog rescue community and volunteer at the MASH Spay and Neuter clinics across the island. And excited to complete a program certificate in Cat Population Management in a few weeks from the University of the Pacific taught by a leader in the nationwide Cat community.

1. I am testifying in support of the measure, HB547 Relating to the Spaying and Neutering of Animals.

Content

Please note that the Spay & Neuter of Animals, specifically cats and dogs is the foundation of any and all activities engaged to reduce their populations. All other efforts, no matter how amazing, will not create the success needed without it.

Let's use the example of Cats...

Owned pet cats are the SOURCE of all community (feral, stray, dumped, etc.) cats.

To reduce the community cat population you need to increase the number of owned cats that are fixed (see <https://www.communitycatspodcast.com/cat-pyramid> for more details).

Trap - Neuter (and Spay) - Vaccinate - Return (TNVR or TNR for short) of community cat colonies that push for 100% fix rate have consistently shown to reduce the average cat population by an order of magnitude compared to Culling (killing a portion of community cats from time to time) or Mass Kills (attempting to kill most all of the cats in an area).

Additionally;

- 1) Spay/neuter is key to addressing the problem of prolific breeding, a root cause of pet and free-roaming cat overpopulation and animal homelessness in Hawaii
- 2) The high cost of spay/neuter surgeries has put spay/neuter surgeries out of reach for many pet owners. Affordable and accessible spay/neuter services are desperately needed for both owned pets and free-roaming cats.
- 3) All of the Hawaiian animal shelters and rescues are facing a high intake crisis, with the number of animal intakes outpacing available resources. Spaying and neutering pets and free-roaming cats is a proven method to decrease animal intake at sheltering facilities.
- 4) Funding for spay and neuter surgeries from private foundations has become severely limited. State support is badly needed.

HB-547

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 1:38:35 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/5/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mira Gurung	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this bill!