

**JOSH GREEN, M.D.**  
Governor

**SYLVIA LUKE**  
Lt. Governor



**SHARON HURD**  
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

**DEAN M. MATSUKAWA**  
Deputy to the Chairperson

State of Hawai'i  
**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**  
KA 'OIHANA MAHI'AI  
1428 South King Street  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96814-2512  
Phone: (808) 973-9600 FAX: (808) 973-9613

**TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD**  
**CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

**BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS**

**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2025**  
**9:30 AM**  
**CONFERENCE ROOM 325 & VIDEOCONFERENCE**

**HOUSE BILL NO. 775**  
**RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL BIOSECURITY**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 775 relating to agricultural biosecurity. This measure appropriates funds to the Department of Agriculture (Department) for permanent positions in agricultural biosecurity established by Act 231, SLH 2024. The Department is in strong support of this measure.

Act 231, SLH 2024, was an important milestone in cementing biosecurity as an investment priority for the State. The threats that pests pose to Hawai'i's agricultural industries, environment, and resident's way of life are continual and ongoing. Only by making on-going financial investments, such as those contained in this measure, can the Department begin to change the trajectory of pest incursions in the State. By making these 44 positions in the Department's Plant Quarantine, Plant Pest Control, and Pesticides Branches permanent full-time equivalent (FTE), it enables the Department to increase its ability to manage the introduction and spread of pests; ensure that pesticide use is safe and appropriate for public health and safety; and implement and maintain control, management, and biocontrol projects for existing pests across the State.



While the Department is extremely appreciative of the \$19,797,868 appropriation, the funds necessary for the 44 FTE positions appear to total \$3,142,692. It should be noted that a comprehensive statewide biosecurity program will require subsequent investments through future legislative sessions and the Department is appreciative of the phased approach that is being taken to ensure the respective Branches are given the time to create the educational pathways to hire, train, and retain qualified individuals for these important positions.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

JOSH GREEN  
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII

SYLVIA LUKE  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



## HAWAII INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL

1151 PUNCHBOWL ST, #325  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

### VOTING MEMBERS

DAWN CHANG  
DEPARTMENT OF LAND & NATURAL  
RESOURCES

SHARON HURD  
HAWAII DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

KATHLEEN HO, D.Env  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

PARWINDER GREWAL, Ph.D.  
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

MARY ALICE EVANS  
BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT &  
TOURISM

DEXTER KISHIDA  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

**Chelsea Arnott, HISC Coordinator on behalf of  
HISC Co-Chair Sharon Hurd and Co-Chair Dawn N.S. Chang**

### **House Committee on AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS**

**Wednesday, February 12, 2025  
9:30 AM**

**State Capitol, Conference Room 325 and Via Videoconference**

### **In consideration of HOUSE BILL 775 RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL BIOSECURITY.**

House Bill 775 Appropriates funds to the Department of Agriculture (HDOA) for permanent positions in agricultural biosecurity established by Act 231 in 2024. **The Hawai'i Invasive Species Council (Council) supports this measure.**

At the Senate's Finance Committee recent Budget hearings the Chair of the Department of Agriculture stated that invasive species was the most significant issue raised by farmers and ranchers and that biosecurity is the focus of the department ([youtube clip for your reference](#) 20 seconds).

In 2024, the State adopted ACT 231 which raised HDOA's biosecurity budget to over \$19M to address various biosecurity matters across Hawaii as well as funding to hire 44 staff in the following positions: plant quarantine inspectors, entomologists, plant pathologists, planners, environmental health specialists, noxious weed specialists and other support staff.

HDOA informs that the quarantine staff will ensure that inspection and quarantine facilities statewide remain effective, ensuring thorough screening of incoming plants, animals, and agricultural products. Environmental health staff will detect, identify, and combat invasive species, minimizing their impact on Hawaii's environment and agriculture. Additionally, Rapid Response and Eradication Programs will be funded to enhance their capacity to swiftly address and eradicate invasive species outbreaks before they become widespread. [[reference](#)]

The Council supports this bill as, after ACT 231's passage Governor Green stated protecting Hawai'i's natural resources and agricultural heritage is a top priority, and HDOA's Chair stated that ACT 231's historic investment in biosecurity and invasive species programs will significantly enhance our ability to protect Hawai'i's unique ecosystems and vital agricultural resources.

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



P.O. Box 253, Kunia, Hawai'i 96759  
Phone: (808) 848-2074; Fax: (808) 848-1921  
e-mail [info@hfbf.org](mailto:info@hfbf.org); [www.hfbf.org](http://www.hfbf.org)

February 12, 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

**TESTIMONY ON HB 775**  
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL BIOSECURITY

Conference Room 325 & Videoconference  
9:30 AM

Aloha Chair Kahaloa, Vice-Chair Kusch, 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 775**, which appropriates funds to the Department of Agriculture (DOA) for permanent positions in agricultural biosecurity established by Act 231, SLH 2024. Strengthening biosecurity is critical to protecting Hawai'i's agricultural industry, environment, and economy from the increasing threat of invasive species.

Invasive species have become one of the most devastating problems impacting Hawai'i. Many invasive species are damaging Hawai'i's environment and economy. Hawai'i's farmers and ranchers face ongoing challenges from invasive pests such as the coconut rhinoceros beetle, little fire ant, coffee berry borer, two-lined spittlebug, macadamia felted coccid, and varroa mite. These pests cause significant damage to crops, increase production costs, and threaten the viability of local agriculture. Once established, invasive species are costly and difficult to control, making prevention and early intervention essential.

Proper funding for DOA is critical for protecting Hawai'i's environment and economy and the health and lifestyle of its people through the support of invasive species prevention, control, research, outreach, and planning. Funding permanent biosecurity positions ensures that DOA has the necessary personnel to conduct critical inspections, enforce quarantine regulations, and implement pest management programs. A well-staffed biosecurity team improves the state's ability to detect and mitigate threats before they cause irreversible harm to Hawai'i's farms and ecosystems.

We request that program funding from HB 2619, CD1, SLH 2024 be included as an amendment to SB 1187 to ensure that biosecurity efforts are fully resourced. In addition to personnel, adequate program funding is necessary to support surveillance, research, and rapid response initiatives. Providing ongoing financial support for biosecurity programs will allow DOA to effectively combat invasive species and protect Hawai'i's agricultural economy.

Prog ID/Org	Position Title/Program Description	Position #	MOF	FTE (P)	FTE (T)	FY 25 \$
AGR 122 EB	Risk Assessment		A			1,000,000
AGR 122 EB	Pest Management Systems Approach		A			1,200,000
AGR 122 EB	Brown Tree Snake Rapid Response		A			1,100,000
AGR 122 EC	Pest Diagnostics		A			500,000
AGR 122 EC	Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle Response		A			1,500,000
AGR 122 EA	Green Waste		A			1,000,000
AGR 122 EA	Compost Reimbursement		A			500,000
AGR122	Public Awareness Campaign		A			2,000,000
AGR 122 EB	Little Fire Ants Response		A			2,500,000
AGR 122 EB	Coqui Frog Response		A			100,000
AGR 122 EB	Invasive Species Outreach		A			100,000
AGR 122 EA	Tech Upgrades		A			2,000,000
AGR 122 EB	Import Replacement Fund		A			500,000
AGR 122 EA	Biosecurity Facility Planning		A			1,500,000
AGR 122 EA	Rose-Ringed Parakeet		A			300,000
AGR 122 EC	Two-Lined Spittlebug		A			800,000

HDOA's Biosecurity Program is essential to fully execute a comprehensive strategy to address the increasing number of invasive species entering the State. This measure will provide resources to DOA to help prevent new invasive species from entering Hawai'i and to control and hopefully eradicate invasive species already established in Hawai'i.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.



House of Representatives  
Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems  
Wednesday, February 12, 2025  
9:30 AM Conference Room 325 & Videoconference  
State Capitol

### Testimony in Support of HB775

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

The Coordinating Group on Alien Pest Species (CGAPS) is **in support of HB775**, *Relating to Agricultural Biosecurity*. This bill provides the Hawaii Department of Agriculture (HDOA) with appropriations to support 44 full-time employee (FTE) positions pursuant to Act 231, Session Laws of Hawaii 2024.

HDOA receives less than half of a percent of the state budget to support all of its branches and functions. The appropriation of funds for the positions listed in HB775 would support three of HDOA's core biosecurity functions: the inspection of domestic goods, inspection and actions to prevent or reduce inter-and intrastate movement of pests, and pesticide regulation. Mahalo for the opportunity to support the bill and for consideration of our testimony.

Aloha,

Christy Martin  
CGAPS Program Manager

Stephanie Easley  
CGAPS Legal Fellow



February 7, 2025

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

**Support of HB 775 (Appropriates funds to the Department of Agriculture [DOA] for permanent positions in agricultural biosecurity established by Act 231, Session Laws of Hawaii [SLH] 2024.)**

**Wednesday, February 12, 2025, at 9:30 a.m.  
State Capitol, Conference Room 325, Via Videoconference**

The Land Use Research Foundation of Hawaii (LURF) is a private, non-profit research and trade association whose members include major Hawaii landowners, developers, and utility companies. LURF's mission is to advocate for reasonable, rational, and equitable land use planning, legislation and regulations that encourage well-planned economic growth and development, while safeguarding Hawaii's significant natural and cultural resources, and public health and safety.

LURF appreciates the opportunity to express its **support of HB 775**, and of the various agricultural stakeholder groups who defend the goals of viable agricultural operations and the conservation and protection of agriculture, including important agricultural lands in Hawaii.

**HB 775.** This bill appropriates funds out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii for the support of the 44 full-time equivalent (44.0 FTE) permanent agricultural biosecurity positions established pursuant to Act 231, SLH 2024.

**LURF's Position.** In 2024, the Hawaii State Legislature voted unanimously to pass HB 2619 (now Act 231, SLH 2024), which bill was considered critical by the local agriculture industry, and the top priority of the Hawaii Farm Bureau. Invasive species such as insects, disease-bearing organisms, reptiles, weeds, and other pests pose the greatest threat to Hawaii's economy, tourism, agriculture, the natural environment, native species and the health and lifestyle of Hawaii's people. In Hawaii, invasive species cause millions of dollars in crop losses, the extinction of native species, the destruction of native wet, moist, and dry land forests, the spread of disease, and the quarantine of exported agricultural crops.

By its passage of HB 2619 in 2024, the Legislature appropriated nearly \$20 million toward the battle against invasive species, providing the DOA support to fight those threats to the State's fragile environment and to help the local agricultural industries, however, a line-item reduction of the appropriation issued by the State Administration reduced said appropriation to \$10 million. HB 2619 designates the DOA as the lead agency in the work to combat invasive species and requires it to coordinate the State's invasive pest control and biosecurity efforts.

The public's health and welfare would benefit by continued and further funding of these biosecurity programs, including the 44 full-time (44.0 FTE) permanent agricultural biosecurity positions established by Act 231, SLH 2024, and identified in this bill.

This measure is also consistent with the underlying intent and objectives of the IAL laws (Hawaii Revised Statutes [HRS], Sections 205-41 to 52), which were enacted to fulfill the mandate in Article XI, Section 3 of the Hawaii State Constitution, "to conserve and protect agricultural lands, promote diversified agriculture, increase agricultural self-sufficiency and assure the availability of agriculturally suitable lands." As noted in HRS Section 205-41, the intent of Act 183 (2005) was to develop agricultural incentive programs to promote agricultural viability, sustained growth of the agricultural industry, and the long-term use and protection of important agricultural lands for agricultural use. Passage of the long-awaited IAL legislation would be pointless without funding for the implementation of programs and positions within the DOA's biosecurity program.

By recognizing the significance of and need to improve and protect the local agriculture industry, establish programs, and fund positions which help to support the growth and maintenance of agriculture in the State, this bill significantly helps to promote economically viable agriculture and food self-sufficiency in Hawaii.

For the above reasons, LURF **supports** **HB 775** and respectfully urges your favorable consideration.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding this matter.

LARRY JEFTS FARMS, LLC  
PO BOX 27  
KUNIA, HAWAII 96759  
(808) 688-2892

HB775, Relating to Agricultural Biosecurity  
House AGR Hearing – 9:30 AM  
Wednesday, February 12, 2025

Testimony By: Larry Jeffs  
Position: Support

Chair Kahaloa, Vice Chair Kusch, and Members of the House AGR Committee:

I am Larry Jeffs, owner and operator of Larry Jeffs Farms, LLC. We have more than 42 years of Hawaii farm experience on Molokai and Oahu. Our family farms grow about 1 million pounds weekly of import replacement produce. I am a volunteer director, serving as Chair of the West Oahu Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). I have also served as an officer of the Hawaii Farm Bureau for many years.

There is an urgency and heightened awareness of the severe damage to agriculture caused by invasive species and the quality of life of our communities. We strongly support sufficient funding for DOA for permanent biosecurity positions. This provides stability and consistency for an effective program to prevent and mitigate invasive species threats before the damage escalates to a crisis.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.



**Hawaii Cattlemen's Council, Inc.**

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

Rep. Kirstin Kahaloa, Chair

Rep. Matthias Kusch, Vice Chair

**HB775**

RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL BIOSECURITY

Wednesday, February 12, 2025, 9:30 AM

Conference Room 325 & Videoconference

Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards, and Members of the Committee,

The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council **supports HB775** which appropriates funds to the Department of Agriculture for permanent positions in agricultural biosecurity established by Act 231, SLH 2024.

Biosecurity should be a high priority for Hawaii as a remote, island state. In order for the Department of Agriculture to effectively carry out its duties, it needs the funds for permanent positions to attract highly qualified candidates to fill these positions.

We appreciate the opportunity to testify on this measure. The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council (HCC) is the Statewide umbrella organization comprised of the four county-level Cattlemen's Associations. Our member ranchers represent over 60,000 head of beef cows; more than 75% of all the beef cows in the State. Ranchers are the stewards of over 750 thousand acres of land in Hawaii, or 20% of the State's total land mass. We represent the interests of Hawaii's cattle producers.

Nicole Galase  
Hawaii Cattlemen's Council  
Managing Director





**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
THE THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE  
REGULAR SESSION OF 2025**

**COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS  
Rep. Kirstin Kahaloa, Chair  
Rep. Matthias Kusch, Vice Chair**

**Wednesday, February 12, 2025 9:30 AM  
Conference Room 325 & Videoconference  
State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street**

**RE: HB 775 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL BIOSECURITY**

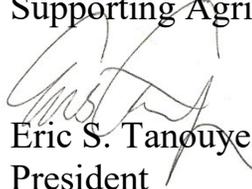
My name is Eric S. Tanouye and I am the President for the Hawaii Floriculture and Nursery Association. HFNA is a statewide umbrella organization with approximately 350 members. Our membership is made up with breeders, hybridizers, propagators, growers, shippers, wholesalers, retailers, educators, and the allied industry, which supports our efforts in agriculture.

The Hawaii Floriculture and Nursery Association (HFNA) **SUPPORTS House Bill 775**

We support a fully funded Department of Agriculture that will allow the department to be properly staffed to implement our State Biosecurity measures. Biosecurity is a critical issue to stop invasive species.

If you have any questions at this time, I would be happy to discuss them and can be reached by phone at 808-959-3535 ext 22, cell 960-1433 and email [eric@greenpointnursery.com](mailto:eric@greenpointnursery.com).

Supporting Agriculture and Hawaii,

  
Eric S. Tanouye  
President

Hawaii Floriculture and Nursery Association



## EAST OAHU COUNTY FARM BUREAU

910 CALIFORNIA AVE., WAHIAWA, HI 96786

February 10, 2025

Representative Kirstin Kahaloa, Chair, and Representative Matthias Kusch, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems  
State Capitol, 415 S. Beretania St.  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Chair Kahaloa, Vice Chair Kusch, and Members of the Committee,

The East O'ahu County Farm Bureau, which represents approximately 420 farmers and supporters of agriculture from Waimanalo to Kahuku, **strongly supports HB 775**, "Relating to Agricultural Biosecurity," which would provide funding for the 44 full-time equivalent agricultural biosecurity positions established by Act 231 (2024).

Invasive pests are a major threat to Hawai'i's agriculture industry. Recently, the coconut rhinoceros beetle has devastated coconut palms on O'ahu. Invasive species such as the little fire ant, rose-ringed parakeet, and many others threaten our crops, our workers, and our livelihoods. Hawai'i depends on food and other goods shipped from the U.S. mainland and elsewhere in the world, and any of these shipments can contain another pest, weed, or pathogen. The biosecurity positions that would be funded by SB 1187 would add greatly to HDOA's ability to inspect incoming shipments, identify potential threats, and reduce the risk that new pests and crop or livestock diseases will enter the State. We therefore respectfully urge your Committee to pass HB 775.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter of great importance to Hawai'i's farmers and ranchers.

Sincerely,

Frederick M. Mencher  
for Grant Hamachi, President  
East O'ahu County Farm Bureau

**HB-775**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 7:53:04 AM

Testimony for AGR on 2/12/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Warren Watanabe	Maui County Farm Bureau	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The Maui County Farm Bureau strongly supports HB775. It is critical that the appropriation be passed for these biosecurity positions.. Agriculture cannot continue with the constant threat of new pests and diseases. Thank you.

**HB-775**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 12:06:34 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/12/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Carol Kwan	Carol Kwan Consulting LLC	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB775. These additional positions are desperately needed.

I am a Certified Arborist with my own consulting business. I work in the industry.

Mahalo,

Carol Kwan

HB 775  
DOA; Biosecurity; Appropriations (\$)  
Agriculture & Food Systems Committee  
Finance Committee  
Public Hearing - 12 February 2025  
9:30 a.m., Conference room 325 via videoconference  
By  
Sarah Duell, Department of Natural Science at Hawai'i Pacific University

Aloha Chairman Kahaloa of the Agriculture & Food Systems Committee and respected committee members,

Mahalo for taking the time to listen to my testimony. My name is Sarah Duell and I am in my last semester of obtaining my bachelor's degree in Environmental Studies at Hawai'i Pacific University; I have also been a resident of Honolulu for five years. I would like to offer my **support for HB 775 DOA; Biosecurity; Appropriations (\$)**.

HB 775 describes how the funds requested will be spent between forty-four permanent agricultural biosecurity positions within the Department of Agriculture.

Biosecurity is very important for preserving the unique plant life throughout the Hawaiian Islands. Hawai'i, despite the state's best efforts, is falling victim to the changing climate. Being the "endangered species capital of the world" means our unique wildlife and plant life is threatened by something that we cannot fully control. Ensuring foreign plants and animals are not being introduced onto the island is an effort we can take to lessen the struggle of these already fragile lifeforms. Allotting jobs to help protect the one of a kind plants will benefit future generations of Hawaiian residents and visitors.

In my environmental ethics class, there was discussion on how ethical it is to preserve resources for future generations and if we are morally responsible to protect them. Protecting native Hawaiian plants is essential to maintaining and preserving the history and culture of the Hawaiian Islands and people. The Nanu flower is endemic on five of the Hawaiian Islands, one being Oahu'. This flower holds significance to Hawaiian history since the flower was used for making dyes and leis. We need more biosecurity to protect these fragile plants from foreign and invasive species. Lots of plants are pushed towards the brink of extinction because of land loss, water competition, urban expansion, wildfires, and animal predation. It is our moral responsibility to protect these unique plant species for future generations to experience.

Hiring new entomologists, environmental health specialists, and plant quarantine inspectors will help protect the fragile and unique ecosystems that makes Hawai'i a valued destination for thousands of travelers. Protecting the land, plants, and animals that live here honors the ancestors and preserves their history for future generations to learn and connect with.

Mahalo for taking the time to listen to my testimony on why I support HB 775.

Sarah Duell  
Department of Natural Science  
Hawai'i Pacific University

**HB-775**

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 1:33:34 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/12/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Gary R Ueunten	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am submitting testimony in favor of HB775. As a small farmer on Kauai growing fruits and vegetables, I fully realize the impact of invasive species on farmers, especially small farmers with limited resources. Much of our farming efforts are devoted to minimizing the impacts of invasive species such as netting Lychee trees for the Rose Ring Parakeet, erecting pig fencing and netting to keep chickens out of vegetable crops. This is addition to our decision not to raise crops that cannot be economically grown due to uncontrollable susceptible invasive species impacts. I would like to have more boots on the ground in the battle against invasive species.

**HB-775**

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 3:36:01 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/12/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Randy Cabral	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support

**HB-775**

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 7:19:03 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/12/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
John R. Gordines	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

These positions are critical to collectively get the jobs done!

**HB-775**

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 9:57:02 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/12/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
J Ashman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this much needed bill.

Thank you.