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SHARON HURD
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TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON WATER AND LAND AND AGRICULTURE
AND ENVIRONMENT

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2025
1:05 PM
CONFERENCE ROOM 229 & VIDEOCONFERENCE

SENATE BILL NO. 746
RELATING TO INVASIVE SPECIES

Chairs Inouye and Gabbard, Vice Chair Elefante and Richards, and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill No. 746 relating to invasive species, which establishes and appropriates moneys for a two-year pilot program under the Department of Land and Natural Resources that incentivizes community members to collect and submit the coconut rhinoceros beetle (CRB) and its larvae for compensation.

The Department of Agriculture (Department) supports the intent of this measure but has concerns regarding how the compensation aspect would be implemented. The Department believes that finding ways to incorporate communities into ongoing control efforts are extremely important, particularly in long-term management and educational standpoints, and depending on the specific program, could make a difference in achieving the highest goal regarding any pest, eradication. The Department believes that "compensation", depending on the form and amount, could invigorate community action. However, the Department is concerned that this measure does not preclude the



use of any kind of monetization for submitting CRB and should a monetary-based structure such as a bounty be used, it could result in the opposite effect on CRB infestations that this measure seeks to remedy.

The biggest challenge for a program such as this one is to find a form of compensation that will greatly incentivize participation but also ensures the compensation structure is not abused. When dealing with a pest, when any form of compensation is tied to it, particularly a monetary one, there is an increased likelihood that individuals seeking to exploit the system would breed and also possibly spread the pest for financial gain, thereby exacerbating the problem the program was designed to deal with. This issue is further exacerbated when dealing with arthropod pests as they are generally not difficult to breed, and often reproduce quickly, and in high numbers. Alternatively, if the compensation is minimized, there is generally a significant decrease in community participation, rendering that part of the program ineffective.

The Department would be supportive of this measure if the compensation structure for community members was clearly defined in such a way as to prevent abuse, or it was removed from the measure. The Department is supportive of the other CRB-related aspects of this measure regarding community engagement, workshops, and training events; digital and social media campaigns; media advertising; and educational materials and outreach.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

JOSH GREEN
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



HAWAII INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL

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

**Senate Committees on
WATER & LAND and
AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT
Wednesday, February 12, 2025
1:05 PM**

State Capitol, Conference Room 224 and Via Videoconference

**In consideration of
SENATE BILL 746
RELATING TO INVASIVE SPECIES**

Senate Bill 746 establishes and appropriates moneys for a two-year pilot program under the Department of Land and Natural Resources that incentivizes community members to collect and submit the coconut rhinoceros beetle and its larvae for compensation. **The Hawaii Invasive Species Council (Council) provides comments on this measure.**

The coconut rhinoceros beetle (CRB) is a highly destructive pest that has caused significant damage to our coconut palms, as well as other trees, throughout Pacific Region and Hawaii. Invasive species like the CRB require coordinated, scientifically informed efforts that consider the broader ecosystem, pest biology, and long-term eradication strategies. Simply paying for the capture of beetles may lead to short-term, isolated responses rather than a comprehensive approach to controlling and eradicating the species.

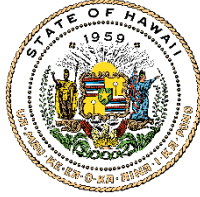
A bounty system, which rewards individuals for capturing or killing these beetles, does not address the underlying complexities of invasive species management. There have been community groups that have hosted CRB captures which can be an important educational activity but does not result in a reduction of the population or a long-term management strategy.

The Council encourages continued focus and resources to support long-term management solutions like biocontrol and training for communities and agricultural producers to conduct control and protect trees in areas where CRB is established.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide comments on this measure.

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

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



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KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

Testimony of
DAWN N. S. CHANG
Chairperson

Senate Committees on
WATER AND LAND
and
AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

Wednesday, February 12, 2025
1:05 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 224 and Via Videoconference

In consideration of
SENATE BILL 746
RELATING TO INVASIVE SPECIES

Senate Bill 746 establishes and appropriates moneys for a two-year pilot program under the Department of Land and Natural Resources that incentivizes community members to collect and submit the coconut rhinoceros beetle and its larvae for compensation. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) offers the following comments.**

The coconut rhinoceros beetle (CRB) is notorious for feeding on the crown of coconut palms and other palm species including, Hawai'i's native loulou palms. CRB creates large holes in the trunk, where adults feed and burrow. This weakens the tree and can eventually kill it. This is a major pest across the Pacific Region, and, in 2023, it expanded from O'ahu to Kaua'i, Maui, and Hawai'i islands. Bounties on invasive species have been tried elsewhere with little success in reducing populations (e.g., cane toads in Australia, stoats and opossums in New Zealand). While bounties can be a helpful educational tool, they require oversight beyond the Department's capacity.

The Department finds that more effective approaches that involve integrated pest management (IPM) strategies, such as biological control using natural predators or parasitoids, are urgently needed. In addition, public outreach and encouraging residents to report beetle sightings and avoid transporting infested mulch would help manage this destructive insect. The Department continues to support the CRB

Response Team based at the University of Hawai'i and island-based working groups to protect natural and cultural resources that are threatened by CRB.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide comments on this measure.



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February 12, 2025

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

TESTIMONY ON SB 746
RELATING TO INVASIVE SPECIES

Conference Room 229 & Videoconference
1:05 PM

Aloha Chairs Inouye and Gabbard, Vice-Chairs Elefante and Richards, and Members of the Committees:

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 SB 746, which establishes a two-year community-based incentive pilot program under the Department of Land and Natural Resources to eradicate the coconut rhinoceros beetle (CRB) in Hawai'i. This measure is a critical step in engaging the public in the fight against one of the most destructive invasive species threatening Hawai'i's agriculture, native ecosystems, and cultural landscapes.

The coconut rhinoceros beetle was first detected in Hawai'i in 2013 at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam and has since spread across O'ahu and to other islands, including Kaua'i, Maui, and Hawai'i Island. CRB infestations cause significant damage to coconut, royal, date, and fan palms, weakening and eventually killing these trees. The beetle's impact extends beyond palms, as it also poses a threat to crops such as Pandanus species, banana, pineapple, and sugarcane. The economic consequences include increased costs for pest control, tree replacement, and lost revenue from agriculture, landscaping, and tourism.

SB 746 creates a community-driven approach to CRB eradication by providing compensation to residents, farmers, landscape professionals, and other stakeholders who collect and submit beetles and larvae to the Department of Land and Natural Resources. This incentive-based strategy has been successfully used in other invasive species control programs, mobilizing community participation while complementing existing government-led eradication efforts.

Key components of this program include:

- Direct compensation to community members for beetle and larvae collection
- Program administration and oversight by the Hawai'i Invasive Species Council
- Community engagement, workshops, and training events to educate the public on CRB identification and control
- Digital and social media campaigns to raise awareness and encourage participation
- Media advertising and outreach to increase public involvement

The Hawai'i Farm Bureau has long advocated for increased resources to combat the spread of invasive species, including the coconut rhinoceros beetle. Controlling CRB infestations requires a multi-faceted approach that includes biological controls, pest control tools, trapping, green waste management, and public engagement. By integrating a community-based response into existing control efforts, SB 746 will enhance early detection, containment, and eradication of this highly destructive pest.

We urge the committee to pass SB 746 to expand CRB control efforts and protect Hawai'i's agriculture, environment, and cultural resources from further damage.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



MELISSA VOMVORIS

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Testimony in Support

SB746 RELATING TO INVASIVE SPECIES

Senate Committee's on Water and Land & Agriculture and Environment

Wednesday, February 12, 2025 - 1:05pm – CR229

Chairs Inouye and Gabbard and Members of the Committees:

I strongly support Senate Bill 746, which establishes a community-based incentive pilot program to combat the coconut rhinoceros beetle (CRB) invasion in Hawaii. Since its discovery at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam in 2013, this invasive pest has spread across multiple islands, threatening not only coconut palms but also culturally significant plants like hala and taro that are fundamental to Native Hawaiian practices.

Traditional pesticide-based approaches are both costly and environmentally harmful. Chemical pesticides can persist in soil for years, endangering beneficial insects and contaminating water systems. The annual cost of pesticide application can exceed \$2,000 per acre, creating an unsustainable burden for landowners while posing health risks to workers and residents.

The proposed community-based program offers a superior solution through:

- **Cost-Effectiveness:** Engaging community members in beetle and larvae collection achieves broader coverage at a fraction of the cost
- **Environmental Protection:** Eliminating harmful chemicals preserves beneficial insects and maintains ecosystem balance
- **Community Empowerment:** The program unites diverse stakeholders, from farmers to military personnel, in environmental stewardship
- **Cultural Preservation:** Protecting culturally significant plants through sustainable methods maintains Native Hawaiian traditions

The program's comprehensive approach, including community engagement, workshops, and media campaigns, will create a sustainable framework for long-term CRB management. This collaborative model can serve as an example for other invasive species control programs throughout the Pacific region.

I urge the committee to support this innovative and environmentally conscious approach to CRB control.

Respectfully submitted,

Melissa Vomvoris