



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS

The Honorable Cedric Asuega Gates, Chair
The Honorable Kirstin Kahaloa, Vice Chair

**S.C.R. NO. 192, S.D. 1, REQUESTING THE OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR TO
CONDUCT A PERFORMANCE AUDIT OF THE PLANT PEST CONTROL BRANCH
AND PLANT QUARANTINE BRANCH WITHIN THE PLANT INDUSTRY DIVISION
OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.**

Hearing: Friday, April 12, 2024, 10:00 a.m.

The Office of the Auditor offers **comments** on S.C.R. No. 192, S.D. 1, which requests the Auditor to conduct a performance audit of the Plant Pest Control Branch and Plant Quarantine Branch (collectively “the Branches”) within the Plant Industry Division of the Department of Agriculture.

While S.C.R. No. 192, S.D. 1 lists specific activities of the Branches that the Legislature is interested in understanding, many of those activities are not auditable. A performance audit assesses an agency’s performance of activities that are key to achieving the agency’s statutory purpose. More specifically, we assess the agency’s *processes* by comparing the actual performance of the activity against procedures or other controls developed by the agency to address risks that could hinder the agency’s performance of the activity. Accordingly, we can audit, for example, the Branches’ processes for designating pests for control or eradication and their processes for conducting pest control or eradication programs on private property. However, other listed items, such as adopting administrative rules, seem to be about “condition,” i.e., have the Branches promulgated administrative rules, and not requesting us to assess the Branches’ processes to implement rules. Accordingly, so we do not misinterpret the request, we recommend that the Committee identify activities about which the Committee is interested to know whether the *processes* used by the Branches to perform those activities are consistent with the procedures and other controls and are effective, efficient, and in compliance with legal requirements.

S.C.R. No. 192, S.D. 1 also requests that the Auditor conduct a performance audit of certain activities of the Plant Quarantine Branch. The items listed appear to be substantively identical to the recommendations contained in our 2017 Audit of Hawai‘i Department of Agriculture’s Plant Quarantine Branch, Report No. 17-05. We reported on the Plant Quarantine Branch’s implementation of the audit recommendations in Report No. 20-12. We suggest that further follow-up on the implementation of the recommendations may be ineffective and of limited value. In the seven (7) years since the audit, the Plant Quarantine Branch likely has changed certain procedures and adopted new technologies and techniques to aid its work. We believe that the activities identified previously that the concurrent resolution requests the Auditor to assess, generally, will cause us to examine the procedures currently employed by the Plant Quarantine

Branch that encompass those procedures that the 2017 recommendations were intended to improve.

Lastly, given the number of programs and functions we are being asked to audit, we are concerned about our ability to complete an audit within the amount of time allowed in the resolution. We request that the Committee amend the resolution to further narrow the program or activities that the Legislature is interested in having us audit or allow additional time for a report to be submitted. We are available to discuss more appropriate language upon request.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

SYLVIA LUKE
Lt. Governor



SHARON HURD
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

DEXTER KISHIDA
Deputy to the Chairperson

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TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS

APRIL 12, 2024
10:00 AM
CONFERENCE ROOM 325 & VIDEOCONFERENCE

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 192, SD1
REQUESTING THE OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR TO CONDUCT A PERFORMANCE
AUDIT OF THE PLANT PEST CONTROL BRANCH AND PLANT QUARANTINE
BRANCH WITHIN THE PLANT INDUSTRY DIVISION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE.

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Concurrent Resolution 192, SD1 that acknowledges that in 2008, pursuant to Part VI. Biosecurity Program of Chapter 150A, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), the Plant Quarantine Branch (PQB) of the Plant Industry Division (PI) was established, authorized by 150A-51, HRS, with the objectives of the biosecurity program: 1) Establish a multi-dimensional system to prevent the entry into the State and interisland movement of pests and prohibited or restricted organisms without a permit; and 2) respond effectively to eradicate, control, reduce, and suppress incipient and established pest populations and seize and dispose of prohibited or restricted organisms entering or within the State without a permit.

The Department supports the audit and requests the resolution is expanded to include the following:



- The performance audit should be amended to a fiscal and performance audit; and
- The fiscal and performance audit should be on all parties involved in the Hawaii Biosecurity plan implementation including: HISC, HDOA Plant Industry, Invasive Species Committees, and Hawaii Ant Lab;

With these additions, the legislature will have a complete view of Hawaii's biosecurity programs and assist in maximizing the effectiveness of protecting Hawaii from invasive species.

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