

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
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT

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FIRST DEPUTY

DEAN D. UYENO
ACTING DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

AQUATIC RESOURCES
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES
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CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS
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HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

Testimony of
DAWN N. S. CHANG
Chairperson

Before the House Committee on
FINANCE

Thursday, February 22, 2024
1:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 308 and Via Videoconference

In consideration of
HOUSE BILL 2644 HOUSE DRAFT 1
RELATING TO LITTLE FIRE ANTS

House Bill 2644 House Draft 1 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 way-of-life of its residents, and 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 that are seeing a serious 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 and has no regulatory authority to enter private property for survey and treatments, conduct inspections, or manage high-risk pathways. They rely solely on voluntary consent to do work on private property. The DOA does have this regulatory authority and is a critical partner in the management of little fire ants and other pests.

The functions, roles, and authorities of each organization need to delegate where they work and ultimately where they lead 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, current funding levels, including \$500,000 from the legislature in FY24, was not enough 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 continued management is the only option. Kaua'i has two large infestations, one of which is located along a major waterway and will take a dedicated on-island team, which currently does not exist, to manage and control those infestations.

Given the crisis of little fire ants, this measure would help address the short and long-term needs to control this major 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
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**TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

**FEBRUARY 22, 2024
1:00 PM
CONFERENCE ROOM 308**

**HOUSE BILL NO. 2644, HD1
RELATING TO LITTLE FIRE ANT**

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 2644, HD1. 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. 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.



Officers

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Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the House Finance Committee,

Chapter Presidents

Clarence Baber
Kohala, Hawaii

The Hawaii Farmers Union is a 501(c)(5) agricultural advocacy nonprofit representing a network of over 2,500 family farmers and their supporters across the Hawaiian Islands. **HFUU supports HB2644.**

Odysseus Yacalis
East Hawaii

This investment is not only crucial for the well-being of our farmers, but also for the overall health and sustainability of our local communities. The Hawaii Farmers Union recognizes the significance of the Hawaii ant lab's efforts and the importance of their continued support. We urge all policymakers to rally behind HB2644 and appropriate the necessary funds to ensure the Hawaii ant lab can effectively address little fire ant infestations statewide. Together, we can safeguard our agricultural industry, protect our communities, and preserve the unique beauty and biodiversity of our beloved state.

Puna, Hawaii

Andrea Drayer
Ka'u, Hawaii

Kona, Hawaii

Fawn Helekahi-Burns
Hana, Maui

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Mason Scharer
Haleakala, Maui

Kaipo Kekona, President HFUU/HFUF

Kaiea Medeiros
Mauna Kahalawai,
Maui

Kaipo Kekona
Lahaina, Maui

Rufina Kaauwai
Molokai

Negus Manna
Lana'i

India Clark
North Shore, O'ahu

Christian Zuckerman
Wai'anae, O'ahu

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Vincent Kimura
Honolulu, O'ahu

Natalie Urminska
Kauai



HAWAII PEST CONTROL ASSOCIATION

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February 22, 2024

Testimony To: House Committee on Finance
Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair

Presented By: Tim Lyons, CAE
Executive Director

Subject: H.B. 2644, HD 1– RELATING TO LITTE FIRE ANTS.

Chair Yamashita and Members of the Committee:

I am Tim Lyons, Executive Director of the Hawaii Pest Control Association and we support this bill.

The Hawaii Ant Lab has done great work in the past, providing research and methodologies regarding little fire ants. This is a very important function, not only for individual citizens but also for the industry.

Based on that, we support this bill and respectfully request your favorable consideration.

Thank you.



House of Representatives
Committee on Finance
Thursday, February 22, 2024
1:00 PM Conference Room 308
State Capitol

Testimony in Support of HB2644 HD1

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Committee,

The Coordinating Group on Alien Pest Species (CGAPS) is **in support of HB2644 HD1, 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. HAL is a world leader in researching the methods and tools for the control and eradication of LFA. HAL also provides extension services to help communities control impacts on their properties on Hawaii island. The funds and positions made available by HB2644 HD1 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.

These funds are urgently needed to support HAL's work across the State. 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 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.

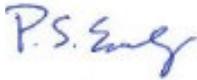
It is critical that HAL has sufficient funding to staff its operations and continue research on LFA management. The additional funding for HAL proposed in HB2644 will support HAL's activities and allow HAL to add staff positions and continue its work across the State.

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 HD1 and for consideration of our testimony.

Aloha,



Christy Martin
CGAPS Program Manager



Stephanie Easley
CGAPS Legal Fellow



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February 22, 2024

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

TESTIMONY ON HB 2644, HD1
RELATING TO LITTLE FIRE ANTS

Conference Room 308 & Videoconference
1:00 PM

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice-Chair Kitagawa, 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, HD1, 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 not consistent with the State's goal of increasing self-sufficiency and sustainability.

HFB recognizes the harm that the little fire ant has caused to farms, businesses, and 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-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 10:40:22 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/22/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
ken love	hawaii tropical fruit growers	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Since its inception the Hawaii Ant Lab has worked with many of our 2200 members around the state helping them to mitigate the LFA problem. I know first hand its a problem and one look at my fire ant scared arm would confirm that. We must as a community continue to support the Ant Lab and work to rid Hawaii of this pest



Food+ Policy Internship 2024

food@purplemaia.org

February 20.2024

To: Chair Yamashita, Vice-Chair Kitagawa, and the Honorable Members of the House Committee on Finance

Subject: **Support of HB2644- HD1**

Aloha kākou,

As Hawaii Food+ Policy, we are writing to express our enthusiastic support for HB2644 HD1, "Relating to Little Fire Ants." This critical piece of legislation represents a vital step forward in addressing the urgent threat posed by little fire ants in Hawaii and provides essential resources to combat their harmful impacts on our communities, environment, and economy.

Little fire ants are an invasive species that have been spreading rapidly throughout the state, posing significant risks to public health, native ecosystems, and agricultural operations. Their small size and inconspicuous appearance make them difficult to detect, while their painful stings can cause severe reactions, including anaphylactic shock. Furthermore, little fire ants can devastate local economies by disrupting tourism, damaging crops, and reducing property values.

Recognizing the need for coordinated action, HB2644 HD1 designates the Hawaii ant lab as the lead organization in addressing little fire ant infestations and appropriates funds to support their efforts. Specifically, the bill allocates resources for staffing, public awareness campaigns, and operational needs, including test kit supplies and treatment supplies. This investment will enhance our state's capacity to effectively control and eradicate little fire ants, safeguarding the health and well-being of our residents and protecting our natural resources for future generations.

The Food+ Policy internship develops student advocates who learn work skills while increasing civic engagement to become emerging leaders. We focus on good food systems policy because we see the importance and potential of the food system in combating climate change and increasing the health, equity, and resiliency of Hawai'i communities.

In 2024, the cohort of interns are undergrads and graduate students from throughout the UH System. They are a mix of traditional and nontraditional students, including parents and veterans, who have backgrounds in education, farming, public health, nutrition, and Hawaiian culture.



Food+ Policy Internship 2024

food@purplemaia.org

Moreover, HB2644 HD1 represents a proactive approach to addressing invasive species management, emphasizing the importance of prevention, early detection, and rapid response. By supporting the Hawaii ant lab in their mission to mitigate the effects of little fire ants, we can mitigate the spread of this invasive species and prevent further harm to our environment and economy.

In conclusion, Hawaii Food+ Policy urges the House Committee on Finance to support HB2644 HD1 and prioritize the allocation of resources necessary to address the little fire ant threat in Hawaii. By investing in proactive measures now, we can protect our communities, preserve our environment, and ensure a sustainable future for all who call Hawaii home.

Mahalo for your attention to this critical issue,

Kawika Kahiapo + Hawaii Food+ Policy Team

The Food+ Policy internship develops student advocates who learn work skills while increasing civic engagement to become emerging leaders. We focus on good food systems policy because we see the importance and potential of the food system in combating climate change and increasing the health, equity, and resiliency of Hawai'i communities.

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SIERRA CLUB OF HAWAI'I

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

February 22, 2024 1:00 PM Conference Room 308

In SUPPORT of:

HB2104 HD1: RELATING TO THE HAWAII INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL

HB2131 HD1: RELATING TO THE TWO-LINED SPITTLEBUG

HB2133 HD1: RELATING TO INVASIVE SPECIES

HB2139 HD1: RELATING TO INVASIVE SPECIES

HB2644 HD1: RELATING TO LITTLE FIRE ANTS

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Committee Members,

On behalf of our over 20,000 members and supporters, the Sierra Club of Hawai'i **SUPPORTS HB2104 HD1, HB2131 HD1, HB2133 HD1, HB2139 HD1, and HB2644 HD1**, which will help to mitigate the ongoing and future impacts of invasive pests on our native ecosystems, cultural practices, food security, public health, economy, and the overall quality of life of present and future generations.

Hawai'i's history provides us with a host of lessons regarding the wide-ranging and potentially irreversible damage that invasive species can inflict on our islands and ways of life. Invasive plants and wildlife have overtaken entire watersheds, impacting not just native habitat but also reducing aquifer recharge, increasing our vulnerability to floods and wildfires, and smothering our nearshore reefs and waters with runoff. Parasites and other pests have impacted local food production and increased the use of toxic pesticides on farms and in home gardens, risking both public health as well as threatening stream and nearshore species critical to our aquatic ecosystems. Invasive animals have also extirpated native species, continue to threaten others with outright extinction, and continue to undermine public health by acting as vectors for zoonotic diseases. Most recently, the spread of invasive pests such as the little fire ant, coconut rhinoceros beetle, hala scale, two-lined spittlebug and others will require substantial and long-needed policies and investments over the long-term, to prevent additional and even greater impacts to our islands and our future generations.

Accordingly, the Sierra Club strongly supports the much needed policies and investments contemplated in these measures. More financial support is critical for the Hawai'i Invasive Species Council to fulfill its biosecurity mission; funding for targeted campaigns to address the little fire ant and two-lined spittlebug are critical to preventing the ecological, cultural, agricultural, public health, and economic impacts of these pests; financial support for businesses and organizations to engage in invasive species control and eradication will engage more of the community in the all-hands-on-deck fight to combat their spread; and



agricultural invasive species placards will encourage agricultural producers to proactively employ best management practices and other measures to prevent and address invasive species on agricultural lands.

The Sierra Club emphasizes that quarantine requirements will also be critical to filling a gap in our regulatory toolbox that has allowed the sale of infested plants and other communities – a gap that has likely contributed to the establishment of coconut rhinoceros beetle on O‘ahu, and the ongoing spread of little fire ants across the islands. **The provisions of HB2758 HD2 would help to fill this regulatory gap and many others, and the Sierra Club accordingly strongly supports that measure as well.**

Much remains uncertain as we continue to reckon with the consequences of Hawai‘i’s longstanding failure to enact critical biosecurity protections. However, it is certain that much stronger action, including but not limited to the proposals in the aforementioned bills, will be necessary to mitigate or prevent the worst of these and other future impacts to our lives and that of our children and future generations.

Accordingly, the Sierra Club of Hawai‘i respectfully urges the Committee to **PASS** these measures. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify.

HB-2644-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 7:46:56 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/22/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mark Suiso	Hawaii Tropical Fruit Growers	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

We are in support of legislation that helps to mitigate⁴³ the impact of little fire ants in Hawaii. At Hawaii Tropical fruit growers we are trying to minimize the movement of plant material between the islands and from location to location. These ants are quick to nest in anything. It seems to take as little as an hour for a group of ants to nest at potted plant, or a box of fruit or a package. An effective way to prevent, monitor and treat infestations needs to evolve. With so many of of impacted and seeking better practices we should be able to fix this challenge. We need support and coordination. *that the legislature can do.*

I do not want us to be afraid of doing this because of fear of the little fire ant.



February 22, 2024

Subject: Testimony to the Hawai'i State House of Representatives regarding House Bill 2644
"Relating to Little Fire Ants"

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice-Chair Kitagawa, and Esteemed Committee Members,

I am submitting testimony on behalf of the O'ahu Invasive Species Committee (OISC) in **strong support** of House Bill 2644 which would establish increased support for research, control and slowing the spread of the community-destroying agricultural pest, little fire ant (*Wasmannia auropunctata*).

Little fire ant (LFA) is one of the 100 worst invasive species in the world according to the Global Invasive Species Database and is rapidly spreading throughout O'ahu. The painful sting can leave welts lasting weeks and blindness in animals resulting from LFA attacks that lead to corneal clouding. Not only is LFA a problem for agriculture in terms of making unsuitable conditions for workers in an infested area, the ant also promotes damage to agricultural products by "farming" other crop pests like aphids and scales for sugary excretions and protecting these pests from predators.

We all are in an "all-hands on deck" scenario in order to contain LFA on both island and statewide levels. Increasing support for Hawai'i Ant Lab will be crucial to any meaningful control efforts moving forward.

OISC very much appreciates your continuing leadership and support for invasive species management. For these reasons I lend OISC's full support behind HB 2644 and thank the Committee for providing our organization with the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo nui loa for your time and consideration,

Nate Dube
Manager, O'ahu Invasive species Committee

HB-2644-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/20/2024 2:29:38 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/22/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Clemens Mayer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am Clemens Mayer, and I strongly support HB2644 HD1

As someone involved in several aspects of conservation, as well as a practitioner of hana no'eau threatened by invasive species. Invasive species, such as the Little Fire Ant, are or can be major threats to public health, as well as being majorly detrimental to commercial sectors such as agriculture and tourism. Therefore, I strongly support this motion to protect the environment of Hawai'i nei from invasive pests.

With warmest regards, Clemens Mayer

HB-2644-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 9:33:50 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/22/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Heather Forester	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Little Fire Ants have been present in Hawaii since at least 1999, and unfortunately, they are here to stay. The need for assistance with prevention and management of this invasive ant species is ongoing on Hawaii Island, and with the exponential increase in detections on Oahu, the need for Hawaii Ant Lab's services are ever growing. Hawaii Ant Lab also collaborates with invasive species committees on the other islands who are also facing the invasion of Little Fire Ants.

Little Fire Ants impact everyone, and if you have them, you cannot dodge their impact without proper management. The Hawaii Ant Lab has been researching this species for 15 years, and has the institutional knowledge to get the job done, correctly and legally. With additional funding, Hawaii Ant Lab can keep their doors open, and employ additional staff to assist the State with this persistent pest.

I support this Bill.

HB-2644-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 10:20:10 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/22/2024 1:00:00 PM

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-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 10:22:57 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/22/2024 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Committee Members,

I Strongly Support HB 2644 HD1.

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 HD1.

HB-2644-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 10:28:44 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/22/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Erin Bishop	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I hereby express my support for the proposed bill and strongly advocate for its enactment. It is imperative that we prevent the LFA issue from becoming a pivotal moment in history, leaving us to lament, "Do you recall the period before the advent of LFA?".

It is of utmost importance that we tackle this issue through a comprehensive approach. This entails not only supporting this bill but also advocating for the enactment of additional legislation that mandates regulatory bodies to take decisive action and ensures the provision of adequate funding for these entities to effectively carry out their mandates. Such measures are essential for assisting communities that have been adversely affected, an achievement that the Department of Agriculture has thus far been unable to accomplish.

Furthermore, there is a growing momentum among the public for initiatives aimed at halting LFA, and the passage of this bill would be a significant step towards responding to these public demands.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Erin Bishop (Kaneohe resident)

HB-2644-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 3:54:04 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/22/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tim F Merriman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e kékou,

I am a small farmer on Napoopoo Rd. in South Kona growing coffee, cacao and mangoes. My fee simple farm is surrounded by a leasehold property with a manager who never treats for fire ants. I have asked him and he admits he does not. I have been taught by the Hawai'i Ant Lab how to use Tango with other ingredients to effectively control fire ants, but we are continually having new colonies appear due to the adjacent property that does nothing to control these. My farm was feral when I bought it, with overgrown coffee trees covered with vines, large grasses and incredible ant problems. The Ant Lab identified my ant colonies by species, pointed out varied safe ways to control them and their representative actually assisted me when I did the first treatment. I have contacted them since then with new questions and they respond quickly. I hope you will keep them well funded. All of us who pick coffee know the hazard of having little fire ants go down our necks from colonies in the treetops and the resulting blisters and sores from their bite. We need this agency and likely always will since many do nothing to control the problem.

Thanks for your consideration.

Tim Merriman, Ph.D.

Heartfelt Kona Coffee (sole proprietorship)

HB-2644-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 4:39:26 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/22/2024 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Dear House Finance Committee,

The Ant Lab has helped my neighborhood. A few years ago they gathered us together as a group to demonstrate how to identify, map, then mix and spray tango bait around our properties. They handed out the recipe for one to five gallon mixes. They continued to help provide the supplies we needed to regularly tango our homes and fields to knock down the little red fire ant. They contact us via email to check on our progress, notify us that it is time to tango again, and see if we need their help. They believe that if you tackle a large contiguous area at the same time, results will be more effective.

Just the cost of a 2.5 gal container of Tango is now between \$575-\$800, an investment that few small homeowners would be able to afford.

On our farm we seem to have control in our orchards. The harvesters claim they are not being bitten by these pests. The LFA seems to love the tall invasive grasses, so keeping these under control is important and a lot of work. Around our structures it has been difficult. During droughts the LFA seeks water and will come into your kitchens and bathrooms. Even spraying poisons inside your house is sometimes necessary.

The Ant Lab is continuing to research other ways of eradicating the LFA. On our farm it is an Ag inspection pest which creates multiple problems for shipping product off the Big Island. We have to painstakingly inspect our packages before delivering, with glasses because they are so small.

Even our pets sleep inside to prevent the LFA from getting into their eyes and causing blindness.

If you do not want these pests to spread to our other islands, please continue to support the Ant Lab in whatever way you can. Prevention is so much cheaper and healthier than trying to take care of it later.

Mahalo,

Jennifer Perry

Kapoho

HB-2644-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 4:46:14 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/22/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
kathleen mishina	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support full funding for HB2644 to expand staffing for Hawaii Ant Lab. Continued support is critical in advancing research, providing community awareness and education, as well as technical support to empower individuals and businesses to control LFA throughout Hawaii. I am a homeowner in Volcano, Hawaii and have experienced the infestation of LFA on our property. Hawaii Ant Lab was instrumental in helping me take control of the problem and presently we do preventive maintenance/mitigation. Very grateful to Heather Forester, her staff, and Hawaii Ant Lab. Thank you,

Kathleen Mishina

HB-2644-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 8:16:28 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/22/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Erik Horn	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

It is critically important to continue to provide reliable funding to efforts to stop the spread of little fire ants. Having stable, hopefully increased funding, will allow eradication of LFA to remain a tangible and achievable goal across the state outside of Hawaii Island. If we hold the line on Oahu and the other islands, as technology marches on, it will eventually make eradication possible on Hawaii island too.

A future without the risk of going blind to ant bites while working in the field is one I want to hold on to.

Committee, please vote yes on this bill.

HB-2644-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 8:22:50 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/22/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
laurie v. carlson	Slow food oahu	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

It is essential that Hawai`i get more serious about insavise species and bio security. We have been extraordinarily lax and unattentive and desperately need to change our ways.

Little red fire ants will destroy tourism, agriculture, and our way of living. The Hawai`i of Hawai`i has already been plagued by these horrible invasive due to state inaction.

we need to pay attention and become much more proactive as we move forward.

please wake up and deal with this impending disaster.

HB-2644-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 8:57:28 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/22/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Patrick Chee	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support funding for the Hawaii Ant Lab (HAL). Little Fire Ants (LFA) are a significant problem already on Hawaii Island and it has spread to other islands in the State. HAL has researched and implemented many ways to mitigate the establishment and spread of LFA. However, without additional funding it is unlikely that HAL will be able to keep up with the growing threat. It is imperative that we fund HAL to address LFA before they spread statewide.

I urge you to support HB2644 and fund the HAL.

Mahalo,
Patrick Chee