

Honolulu, Hawaii

MAR 25, 2024

RE: H.C.R. No. 189
H.D. 1

Honorable Scott K. Saiki
Speaker, House of Representatives
Thirty-Second State Legislature
Regular Session of 2024
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems, to which was referred H.C.R. No. 189 entitled:

"HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION URGING THE STATE TO PROHIBIT THE INTRODUCTION OF BIOCONTROL AGENTS THAT MIGHT THREATEN ECONOMICALLY IMPORTANT FORAGE GRASS SPECIES,"

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose of this measure is to urge the State to:

- (1) Prohibit the use of biocontrol agents that might threaten economically important forage grass species; and
- (2) Provide for the protection of Hawaii's rangelands and grass species that sustain beef cattle production through funding policies, initiatives, and directives to state agencies.

Your Committee received testimony in support of this measure from the Department of Agriculture; Hawaii Cattlemen's Council; Larry Jefts Farms, LLC; Hawai'i Farm Bureau; Hawaiian Electric and ten individuals. Your Committee received testimony in opposition of this measure from the Department of Land and Natural Resources.



Your Committee finds that Hawai'i's beef cattle industry has created significant economic and environmental benefits, including contributions to the state economy, job creation, food security, and culture. Your Committee recognizes the importance of Hawaii's rangelands, which cover about twenty percent of the state's landmass, in providing ecosystem services such as soil stabilization and carbon sequestration. It recognizes ranchers as essential stewards of these lands, managing them through livestock grazing to prevent soil erosion and invasive weed growth. Your Committee further finds reason for concern regarding the labeling of certain forage grasses as invasive species, noting their importance for both livestock feed and ecological balance. Your Committee acknowledges the role of livestock grazing in managing these grasses and reducing the risk of wildfires.

Your Committee has amended this measure by:

- (1) Deleting language describing ranchers as grass farmers and replacing it with the critical role they play in managing lands and reducing fuels loads; and
- (2) Adding language requesting the State to also consider a holistic approach when addressing wildfire risk by utilizing a variety of tools and strategies.

As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems that is attached to this report, your Committee concurs with the intent and purpose of H.C.R. No. 189, as amended herein, and recommends its adoption in the form attached hereto as H.C.R. No. 189, H.D. 1.

Respectfully submitted on
behalf of the members of the
Committee on Agriculture & Food
Systems,



CEDRIC ASUEGA GATES, Chair



