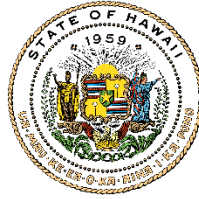


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

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
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KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

Testimony of
DAWN N. S. CHANG
Chairperson

Before the Senate Committee on
HIGHER EDUCATION
and
AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

Monday, March 17, 2025
1:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 224 and Via Videoconference

In consideration of
HOUSE BILL 643, HOUSE DRAFT 2
RELATING TO THE COCONUT RHINOCEROS BEETLE

House Bill 643, House Draft 2, establishes short-term management initiatives for the coconut rhinoceros beetle response program and appropriates funds for activities and positions related to coconut rhinoceros beetle infestation control. **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 Executive Budget request.**

The coconut rhinoceros beetle (CRB) is a significant pest across the Pacific Region. The insect's primary host is the coconut palm (*Cocos nucifera*), which provides soil stabilization and coastal erosion control and is a culturally important component of our community forests in Hawaii. However, these beetles can also attack native forest species. Damage and mortality have been observed among our native Hawaiian palms, loulou (*Pritchardia* spp.), of which many species are threatened or endangered. The beetles can also attack hala (*Pandanus tectorius*), which is an essential component of native lowland wet forests and was used to weave sails for the original Hawaiian voyaging canoes and many utilitarian items such as baskets and mats and is an important resource within Hawaiian culture.

First detected in Hawaii in 2013, CRB had been contained to O'ahu for many years but was found established on Kaua'i in 2023. It was recently detected in very low levels on Maui and Hawai'i Islands, where eradication is still feasible. The University of Hawai'i (UH) CRB Response Team,

which is the lead for CRB monitoring, response, research, and outreach statewide, was initially funded by the USDA APHIS with the goal of eradication for the State. Since statewide eradication is no longer feasible, federal funding for the UH's response is now in jeopardy.

Islands without established CRB populations are working closely with UH on prevention, survey, and rapid response. However, management of this destructive pest is also desperately needed on O'ahu and Kaua'i to mitigate impacts to natural resources, agricultural producers, tourism, and our community.

This measure would provide urgently needed State support to the UH CRB Response Team to continue and expand their work to help mitigate impacts and manage CRB. The team also leads in investigating potential landscape-level tools like biological control that have proven effective on other Pacific Islands and will be necessary to bring this pest under control.

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

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 HIGHER EDUCATION
AND AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

March 17, 2025
1:00 P.M.
CONFERENCE ROOM 224 & VIDEOCONFERENCE

HOUSE BILL NO. 643, HD2
RELATING TO THE COCONUT RHINOCEROS BEETLE PROGRAM

Chairs Kim and Gabbard, Vice Chairs Kidani and Richards, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 643, HD2 relating to the coconut rhinoceros beetle program. The bill establishes short-term management initiatives for the Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle (CRB) response program and appropriates funds for activities and positions related to coconut rhinoceros beetle infestation control.

The Department strongly supports the measure. The University of Hawai'i works in close collaboration with the Department; short-term management initiatives and financial support for control and mitigation of CRB statewide is imperative to continue prioritized research and implementation projects the CRB Response Program has initiated.

Although the Department supports all the short-term management initiatives provided in the bill the Department has several comments related to those initiatives:

- While there are voluntary best management practices to mitigate and control CRB such as protective netting, other practices such as pesticide application are required and are regulated by State and Federal laws. The Pesticides



Branch within the Department may be able to assist with the annual workshops and training opportunities.

- More specific details related to the subsidy should be provided such as maximum reimbursement per tree treated.
- The Plant Quarantine Branch does not currently have an approved treatment for fumigation of containerized mulch, compost, and other plant care components. The only approved treatment for moving mulch, compost, and other plant care components within the State is heat treatment. The Department is currently working with stakeholders to determine alternative fumigation techniques.
- Biocontrol research funding associated with the creation of positions should work in partnership with the Department's Plant Pest Control Branch, specifically the Biocontrol Section.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



Legislative Testimony

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB643 HD2 RELATING TO THE COCONUT RHINOCEROS BEETLE PROGRAM.

Senate Committee on Higher Education
Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment

March 17, 2025

1:00 p.m.

Room 224

Aloha Chairs Donna Mercado Kim and Gabbard, Vice Chairs Kidani and Richards, and Members of the Committees,

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs strongly **supports HB643 HD2**, which establishes short-term management initiatives for the coconut rhinoceros beetle response program and provides essential funding to ensure the program's continued efforts. The coconut rhinoceros beetle poses a grave threat to the niu, a culturally and economically significant plant in Hawai'i. Niu has long been a vital resource for Native Hawaiians, providing food, medicine, tools, and materials for traditional practices. Its deep-rooted significance extends beyond utility, symbolizing resilience, sustainability, and the connection between kanaka and 'āina. The ongoing destruction of coconut palms due to beetle infestations endangers not only this invaluable resource but also the cultural traditions that have been passed down through generations.

The approach outlined in HB643 HD2 is necessary to combat this growing crisis. Educating tree trimmers, arborists, and the landscaping industry ensures that best management practices are widely adopted and that misinformation regarding treatment options does not further exacerbate the issue. Providing financial assistance for residential palm owners makes it possible for more community members to actively participate in protecting their trees from infestation. Expanding response efforts to all islands will allow for early detection and containment, reducing the likelihood of widespread damage. Strengthening interisland biosecurity measures, such as canine inspections of high-risk cargo, will help prevent further spread to uninfested areas. Investing in biocontrol research offers a long-term solution that aligns with Native Hawaiian values of mālama 'āina, ensuring that management efforts are both effective and ecologically responsible.

HB643 HD2 represents a necessary and proactive step toward ensuring that Hawai'i does not lose this critical resource to an invasive species that can still be controlled if addressed with urgency and adequate funding. The Office of Hawaiian Affairs urges the Legislature to **pass HB643 HD1** and provide the stable support needed to combat the coconut rhinoceros beetle before its impact becomes irreversible.

OFFICE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

NALANI BRUN, DIRECTOR



DEREK S.K. KAWAKAMI, MAYOR
REIKO MATSUYAMA, MANAGING DIRECTOR

Testimony of Nalani Kaauwai Brun

Director, Office of Economic Development- County of Kaua'i

Before the
Senate Committee on Higher Education
And
Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment
March 17, 2025, at 1:00 PM
Conference Room 224 & Via Videoconference

In consideration of
House Bill HB643 HD2
Relating to the Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle Program

Honorable Chairs Kim and Gabbard, Vice-Chairs Kidani and Richards, and Members of the Committees:

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in **strong support of HB643 HD2**. The Office of Economic Development sincerely appreciates the legislature's responsiveness in amending the bill to include Kaua'i in response team deployments, drone monitoring, and other critical measures. These updates reflect a strong commitment to statewide collaboration in managing this devastating pest.

As written, this bill provides vital support for mitigation, containment, and long-term biocontrol research. However, to ensure resources are effectively utilized, we respectfully request an amendment to explicitly ensure equitable distribution of funds based on infestation severity, risk level, and specific needs on each island, including Kaua'i. Additionally, we urge the committee to consider fast-tracking response efforts for Kaua'i to prevent further damage to our environment, economy, and cultural resources.

Requested Amendment to Section 2 (3) – Expedited Response for Kaua'i and Other Affected Islands

"Expanding the coconut rhinoceros beetle response program to Hawai'i Island, Maui, Moloka'i, Kaua'i, and Lāna'i upon detection of infestations, with priority given to the severity of infestation, risk level, and specific needs of each island, ensuring expedited services where most needed, including on Kaua'i."

Requested Amendment to Section 4 – Equitable Funding and Expedited Action for Kaua'i

"Funds allocated under this Act shall be distributed equitably across all counties based on infestation severity, risk factors, and specific resource needs. Priority shall be given to areas where early intervention can prevent widespread economic and ecological damage."

We appreciate the importance of ensuring funding is allocated where it will have the greatest impact. Some communities, like Kaua'i County, face a disproportionate burden from invasive species due to their landscape and economic reliance on natural resources. Equitable funding ensures resources are directed to high-risk areas where early action can most effectively prevent costly, large-scale infestations. Investing

in containment now saves exponentially more in long-term eradication costs, reducing future burdens on both public and private landowners while protecting rural and agricultural economies.

- Kaua'i already has confirmed CRB infestations, requiring immediate attention to prevent further spread.
- Fair resource allocation ensures that funds reach the areas most in need, rather than being distributed evenly without consideration of infestation risk or severity.
- Fast-tracking mitigation efforts on Kaua'i could prevent a long-term crisis, reducing costs and protecting the agricultural and tourism industries.
- Delaying intervention increases the risk of exponential CRB population growth, making future eradication efforts significantly more challenging and expensive.

We fully support this bill and greatly appreciate the consideration of proposed amendments included in this testimony to ensure that resources are distributed equitably across all counties, based on infestation severity, risk factors, and specific resource needs. By incorporating clear language ensuring equitable funding distribution and prioritizing expedited action, we can strengthen the effectiveness of Hawai'i's CRB response and safeguard our state's natural and economic resources.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

COUNTY COUNCIL

Mel Rapozo, Chair
KipuKai Kualī'i, Vice Chair
Addison Bulosan
Bernard P. Carvalho, Jr.
Felicia Cowden
Fern Holland
Arryl Kaneshiro



Council Services Division
4396 Rice Street, Suite 209
Lihū'e, Kaua'i, Hawai'i 96766

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY CLERK

Jade K. Fountain-Tanigawa, County Clerk
Lyndon M. Yoshioka, Deputy County Clerk

Telephone: (808) 241-4188
Facsimile: (808) 241-6349
Email: cokcouncil@kauai.gov

March 13, 2025

TESTIMONY OF FERN HOLLAND
COUNCILMEMBER, KAUAI COUNTY COUNCIL
ON
HB 643, HD 2, RELATING TO THE COCONUT RHINOCEROS BEETLE
PROGRAM
Senate Committee on Higher Education
Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment
Monday, March 17, 2025
1:00 p.m.
Conference Room 224
Via Videoconference

Dear Chair Kim, Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in SUPPORT of HB 643, HD 2, Relating to the Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle Program. My testimony is submitted in my individual capacity as a member of the Kaua'i County Council.

Regarding HB 643, HD 2, please ensure that resources to fight infestations are effectively utilized and **explicitly ensure equitable distribution of funds based on severity of infestations, the risk level and specific needs on each island, including Kaua'i**. I urge you to consider fast tracking response efforts for Kaua'i to prevent further spread, as the situation is urgent on Kaua'i.

Please support all efforts to increase and support more robust biosecurity for Hawai'i and please help Kaua'i battle the impacts and spread of Coconut Rhinoceros Beetles (CRB), before it is too late for.

Kaua'i is facing a growing infestation of CRB and is in a critical time where we have gone from detection to an explosion in populations. Kaua'i may still be in the window of eradication, and we need all the support we can get to accomplish this.

This invasive species is one of the largest invasive threats we may have ever faced in recent years. This species threatens many of our core agricultural crops and important cultural sites and plant species (such as our endemic Loulu, *Pritchardia*, palms and Hala, *Pandanas*) as well as our renowned and historical groves along the Royal Coconut Coast and the overall landscape look and tropical visual image of Kaua'i and Hawai'i.

Chair Kim, Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committees
Re: HB 643, HD 2, Relating to the Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle Program
March 13, 2025
Page 2

It is hard to even begin to calculate the economic cost that CRB will have on Kaua'i. We must work collaboratively to be all in on eradication efforts and respond with unprecedented biosecurity actions.

Please do everything you can to fast-track action and response, education and funding for the management and, wherever possible, eradication of CRB.

We need to invest in both immediate responses and eradication efforts and long-term biological control options.

Please support HB 643, HD 2 and help provide as much support as possible to address the CRB crisis in every way possible.

Thank you again for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 643, HD 2. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or Council Services Staff at (808) 241-4188 or via email to cokcouncil@kauai.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fern Holland', with a stylized flourish at the end.

FERN HOLLAND
Councilmember, Kaua'i County Council

AAO:ss

RICHARD T. BISSEN, JR.
Mayor

JOSIAH K. NISHITA
Managing Director



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
COUNTY OF MAUI
200 SOUTH HIGH STREET
WAILUKU, MAUI, HAWAII 96793
www.mauicounty.gov

TO: Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair
Committee on Higher Education

Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair
Senator Herbert M. "Tim" Richards III, Vice Chair
Committee on Agriculture and Environment

FROM: Richard T. Bissen, Jr., Mayor
Rogerene Arce, Director of Agriculture

DATE: March 15, 2025

SUBJECT: **SUPPORT OF HB643 HD2, RELATING TO THE COCONUT
RHINOCEROS BEETLE PROGRAM.**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **SUPPORT** of this measure. The Act establishes short-term management initiatives for the coconut rhinoceros beetle response program. Appropriates funds for activities and positions related to coconut rhinoceros beetle infestation control.

We **SUPPORT** this measure for the following reasons:

1. Short- and long-term management initiatives are needed to mitigate and control the spread of coconut rhinoceros beetle (CRB). Management, eradication, and prevention of CRB is foundational to food security, the health and wellness of our 'āina, and sustainability and resilience overall.
2. There are known biocontrol agents that are utilized in Southeast Asia to manage CRB. Safely testing and researching these agents for use in Hawai'i would support our collective management initiatives of this very invasive pest.
3. Our cultural identity and ecological heritage in Hawai'i are negatively impacted by CRB. We must seek every option in the management and control of CRB; from community education to expanding the current CRB response program.

Mahalo for your consideration.



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM
‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

LATE

Legislative Testimony
Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Higher Education
Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment
March 17, 2025 at 1:00 p.m.

By
Parwinder Grewal, Dean
College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience
And
Michael Bruno, Provost
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

HB 643 HD2 – RELATED TO THE COCONUT RHINOCEROS BEETLE PROGRAM

Chairs Kim and Gabbard, Vice Chairs Kidani and Richards, and Members of the Committees:

The University of Hawai'i supports the intent of this community initiative and offers comments on HB 643 HD2 relating to the Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle (CRB) Program which establishes short-term management initiatives for a CRB response with appropriations for activities and positions.

The landscape-altering impact of CRB is being realized across many neighborhoods on O'ahu and Kaua'i. As populations build on these islands, there is an increased threat of spread to Lāna'i, Moloka'i, and Ni'ihau, as well as reintroductions to Maui and Hawai'i Island. The Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle Response (CRBHawaii.org), a federally-funded emergency response program based in the University of Hawai'i Mānoa College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience (UHM-CTAHR), has been working to suppress and eradicate CRB subpopulations since 2014. The status of future federal funding to support this program is unclear and the current Cooperative Agreements with the U.S. Department of Agriculture for canine detection and operational response terminate in June and August 2025, respectively.

UHM-CTAHR views this bill as an important effort to develop State support for the CRB Response program. Researchers at UHM-CTAHR are collaborating with the Hawai'i Department of Transportation and the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture, the fumigant registrant, and a local pest control company to start fumigation trials with sulfuryl fluoride. In early April UHM-CTAHR will work with United States Department of Agriculture Agricultural Research Service and the same local pest control company to evaluate another fumigant, phosphine.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this measure.

HB-643-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 1:01:44 PM

Testimony for HRE on 3/17/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
William W. Steiner	Testifying for Hawaii Oil Seed Producers (HOSPRO)	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

HOSPRO, a 4501c5 agricultural cooperative, is in the process of building a vegetable oil industry in Hawaii based on production from hybrid oil palms carrying genes for dwarfness, drought tolerance, and increased fertility. Proof-of-concept studies confirm elevation and soil preferences, resistance to local insect and fungal pests, and production averages of 600 gallons/acre. On the Big Island, 45 landholders have already signed up some 2,500 acres to receive palms which begin producing at 3 years of age. The edible oil can be used for biofuel (Pacific Biodiesel is interested) including transformation to sustainable aviation fuel, and the waste for making compost or animal feed. New industries in cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, biofibers, compostable bioplastics, soaps, waxes and more is possible. New industries will offer job replacements as ocean rise takes away beaches and tourism. The palms will be grown on underutilized land cleared in a prior century for failed commodity crops. Biochar made from invasive trees and ROD-killed Ohia will provide soil nutrients and water retention and a HOSPRO share for every palm planted. Up to 30 different shade-tolerant food crops can be planted between trees creating an integrated system. Leguminous grasses can provide nitrogen for the trees and grazing for livestock. This vision for a sustainable, resistant bioeconomy for Hawaii is threatened by Rhinoceros Beetle (RCB) and we heartily endorse any measure that can help control this pest, especially the use of dogs and drones. SE Asia has managed to continue production of palm oil in the presence of RCB where it appears to lower production about 20%, but the techniques we develop here may cut into this loss. We would be glad to work with UH researchers to develop RCB-resistant strains of our hybrids and propose that the bill add this as an amendment. The future of successful bioeconomy supporting nature, jobs, new industries, and reduced imports depends on this bill. Please pass it.

Mahalo

William Moekahi Steiner, Ph.D.

General Manager, HOSPRO

**Testimony of The Nature Conservancy
Supporting HB643 HD2, Relating to the Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle Program.
Committee on Higher Education
Committee on Agriculture and Environment
March 17, 2025 at 1:00 pm
Conference Room 224 and via Videoconference**

Dear Chairs Kim and Gabbard, Vice Chairs Kidani and Richards, and Members of the Committee:

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify today. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) Hawai'i and Palmyra supports HB643 HD2, which would establish short-term management initiatives for the coconut rhinoceros beetle (CRB) response program and appropriate funds for activities and positions related to CRB beetle infestation control.

Since the first CRB detection in 2013, the CRB Response team has been funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) with the goal for statewide eradication. Unfortunately, with the current control tools available, this goal is unattainable and funding is at risk of being cut. Support from the State for CRB Response is necessary to continue vital work of managing the destructive CRB and can be leveraged for alternative Federal funding.

The CRB Response team is responsible for monitoring, control, research, and outreach for the state and works closely with state agencies, the counties, and partner organizations. The CRB Response team has successfully contained CRB populations to the initial detection region on O'ahu for several years despite the lack of regulations around intrastate green waste management.

Species that evolve on islands do so in the absence of some of the world's more competitive species, like the CRB, and it is these invasive species that threaten the state's biodiversity, as well as economic drivers including the agriculture and tourism sectors. Supporting the ongoing management of invasive species essential to ensuring that Hawaii's biodiversity is protected.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify and provide comments for HB643 HD2.

Guided by science, TNC is a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of the lands and waters upon which all life depends. The Conservancy has helped protect more than 200,000 acres of natural lands in Hawai'i and Palmyra Atoll. We manage 40,000 acres in 13 nature preserves and have supported over 50 coastal communities to help protect and restore the nearshore reefs and fisheries of the main Hawaiian Islands.

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BIISC
23 E. Kawili St.
Hilo, HI 96720
(808) 933-3340
www.biisc.org



March 11, 2025

Hearing: Senate Committee on Higher Education and Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment

RE: HB643

Aloha Chairs Kim and Gabbard, Vice Chairs Kidani and Richards, and Members of the Committees,

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of HB 643, which establishes short-term management initiatives for the coconut rhinoceros beetle (CRB) response program and appropriates funding for critical control activities and positions.

The University of Hawai'i CRB Response team on O'ahu has been at the forefront of efforts to control this invasive pest, but their work has relied heavily on funding from the USDA, which is limited in scope. Stable funding from our state is essential to ensure that CRB control efforts can continue as the species is detected in new locations, as it was here on Hawai'i Island in Waikoloa in late 2023. Since that detection, we at BIISC have received crucial information, guidance, and support from the UH-CRB Response team in our efforts to combat this beetle on our island. While the number of detections remains low, we are at a pivotal moment. Eradication of CRB on Hawai'i Island is still possible, but only with continued support and expertise from the CRB Response Team.

We are also strongly in favor of the funding proposed in HB643 to support the development of a biocontrol solution—an essential component of long-term management. Biocontrol provides a sustainable, cost-effective way to reduce CRB populations and lessen the pest's impact on our environment and economy. This proactive approach is especially critical for Hawai'i, where the stakes are high and the costs of inaction are even higher.

As someone working directly with communities to address invasive species issues, I have witnessed firsthand the value of a strong and well-supported response program. The funding provided by HB643 will extend critical support to neighbor islands, ensuring a coordinated effort to control CRB and protect Hawai'i's unique environment and cultural resources.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to pass HB643. Mahalo for your time and consideration of this important issue.

Me ka ha'aha'a,

Kawehi Young
Public Outreach Coordinator
Big Island Invasive Species Committee

HB-643-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 5:11:06 PM

Testimony for HRE on 3/17/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carol Kwan	Testifying for Carol Kwan Consulting LLC	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support HB643, HD2. With USDA funding ending, it is imperative that the State step up to fully fund and expand the program. I am a consulting Certified Arborist small business owner working in the landscaping industry. Plant nurseries alone are losing millions of dollars worth of inventory to CRB. I spoke with one nursery owner who had lost \$300,000 worth just at his nursery. Training those who work in the industry is key to controlling CRB, as is going through the process to get approval of releasing biocontrol agents once they've been determined to not harm non-target species. And we need to be doing everything possible to eradicate CRB on the Neighbor Islands.

Mahalo,

Carol Kwan



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Andrea Drayer
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Fawn Helekahi-Burns
Hāna, Maui

Mason Scharer
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Kaiea Medeiros
Mauna Kahālāwai,
Maui

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Vincent Kimura
Honolulu, O'ahu

Natalie Urminska
Kaua'i

Aloha Chairs Kim & Gabbard, Vice Chairs Kidani & Richards, and Members of the Committees,

The Hawai'i 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. **HFU supports HB643.**

The Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle (CRB) poses a significant threat to Hawaii's agricultural landscape, particularly its coconut and palm populations. HB643, which focuses on establishing short-term management initiatives for the CRB response program, is an essential measure for protecting our farms and natural resources from this invasive species. By allocating funds for activities related to CRB control, this bill enables the implementation of immediate actions to manage and mitigate the impact of these pests. This proactive approach not only safeguards the livelihoods of local farmers but also helps preserve the unique biodiversity of our islands.

Supporting HB643 means ensuring that Hawaii's agricultural sector remains robust and resilient in the face of invasive threats. The legislation promotes initiatives that focus on both containment and long-term eradication strategies, laying a foundation for comprehensive management of the CRB. Establishing positions and funding necessary activities will enhance the capacity to respond swiftly and effectively to beetle outbreaks, minimizing economic losses for farmers and protecting crucial crop systems. This is an investment in the sustainability of Hawaii's agriculture, contributing to the overall health of our communities and ecosystems.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Hunter Heavilin
Advocacy Director
Hawai'i Farmers Union

HB-643-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/13/2025 7:57:38 PM

Testimony for HRE on 3/17/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Richard Kelley	Testifying for Hawaii Island Palm Society	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

On behalf of the Hawaii Island Palm Society, I am writing you asking that all available resources be directed at stopping the spread of coconut rhinoceros beetle (CRB) in the islands. Residents of the Big Island have recently suffered multiple devastating infestations of invasive species that have taken a major toll on the local economy. Little red fire ants have spread across the entire island forcing all agriculture producers to constantly treat their facilities to maintain their export permits. Rapid ohia`a death is destroying our native forests. And while coqui frogs do not directly damage crops, they are a major nuisance. Each of these might have been stopped if effective emergency measures were taken immediately upon first detection, but now it is too late. We will be living with these pests forever, and Hawaii will be much poorer as a result.

We want to impress upon you that Hawaii cannot learn to live with CRB. Without any natural predators here, CRB will spread explosively and decimate palms and other plants if not eradicated at the point of first sighting. Damage in Oahu is already extensive. The threat to the Big Island is upon us. Just some of the easily foreseen results:

The Big Island is home to some of the most significant palm collections in the world holding rare specimens of species extinct in the wild or under great threat. Due to our climate, Hawaii can preserve many of the several thousand palm species found in the vanishing tropical rain forests around the world. Hawaii recently hosted the International Palm Society's Biennial Tour. They chose to come here because the dozens of amazing public and private palm collections on the island let them see many hundreds of rare species flourishing as nowhere else in the world. This irreplaceable genetic resource is at imminent risk.

We also have some of the most important palm nurseries that supply plants to retail nurseries throughout the country. They are at the heart of the 'conservation through cultivation' strategy. The Hawaii horticultural sector is under stress from so many directions, the last thing we need is a pest like CRB.

The state's economy is heavily dependent upon tourism. If palms are lost from our iconic lush tropical landscape, that will certainly affect visitors' experience. Tourists cannot see little red fire ants, but they will definitely notice that huge palm trees are dying everywhere they go. Just considering the Hilo area, what would happen if we lose the palms in tourist destinations like Hawaii Tropical Bioreserve and Gardens, the Pana`ewa Zoo, and the Botanical Gardens at UH-Hilo?

We desperately need effective, coordinated action from all relevant state offices.

HB-643-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/15/2025 2:04:26 PM

Testimony for HRE on 3/17/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Eileen Hilton	Testifying for Windward Coalition	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

March 15, 2025

RE: Support for HB 643

Aloha Chairs Mercado Kim, Mike Gabbard and committee members

The Windward Coalition supports HB643 to combat the invasive CRB species threatening Hawaii's agriculture and ecosystems. The bill demonstrates:

- Support for Invasive Species Management:
 - Addresses funding gaps in the CRB Response Program critical for onitoring, controlling, and researching CRB infestations.
 - Supports long-term solutions, such as developing biocontrol agents that have shown success in other regions.
- Economic and Environmental Protection:
 - CRB poses a significant threat to Hawaii's coconut palms, bananas, and other economic plants like hala and ulu. These resources are vital for cultural practices, tourism, and agriculture.
 - This bill could prevent future economic losses caused by CRB damage.
- Community Benefits:
 - Increased public awareness and engagement in combating CRB, empowering communities to contribute to eradication efforts.
- Strategic Use of Resources:
 - The bill allocates funds for specific purposes, such as \$250,000 for canine inspections for beetle larvae and \$200,000 for full-time research positions.

The Windward Coalition supports this bill for the reasons above but does have some reservations including::

- The allocation of \$160,000 for canopy treatments that may not be practical or effective in the long-term.
- Follow through would be compromised by the nearterm end of federal funding for the CRB Response Program.

Mahalo for your time and consideration of our comments,

Eileen Hilton MD

President, Windward Coalition

HB-643-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/15/2025 3:04:57 PM

Testimony for HRE on 3/17/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Master Shelby "Pikachu" Billionaire	Testifying for Ohana Unity Party & Kingdom of The Hawaiian Islands	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Dear Members of The Hawaii State Legislator who LOVE CRB Recipes:

I am writing to passionately support House Bill No. 643, which fortifies the Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle (CRB, *Oryctes rhinoceros*) Response Program at the University of Hawaii. This bill is a visionary step to protect our palm trees—vital to Hawaii’s \$70 million agricultural economy (USDA, 2023), cultural heritage, and ecosystems—while opening an unexpected door: eating CRB as a sustainable protein. With data-backed urgency, innovative management, and global culinary inspiration, H.B. No. 643 deserves your full endorsement.

CRB Threat: Data & Impacts

Since its 2013 arrival in Hawaii, CRB has wreaked havoc:

- **Economic Damage:** CRB kills palms by boring into fronds, with a single beetle causing up to 50% crown loss (University of Hawaii CTAHR, 2023). Hawaii’s 1.5 million coconut palms (est. UH Manoa, 2022) support a \$10M coconut industry—losses could hit millions annually if unchecked (FAO, 2020).
- **Spread:** Established on Oahu (80% of infestations, UH CRB Program, 2024), with outposts on Kauai, Hawaii Island, and beyond. Each female lays 50–100 eggs (USDA APHIS, 2023), amplifying infestations.
- **Cultural Loss:** Palms like niu are Polynesian canoe plants, foundational to Hawaiian identity—CRB threatens this legacy.
- **Current Efforts:** The UH-led program traps 10,000+ beetles yearly on Oahu (UH Manoa, 2024), but federal emergency funds are drying up after a decade, risking collapse without state support.

H.B. No. 643’s \$___ appropriation (to be specified) sustains this fight with training, canopy subsidies, interisland response, canine inspections, drones, and biocontrol research—crucial as CRB spreads.

CRB as Food: Benefits & Data

Why stop at eradication? CRB is edible, offering a protein-packed twist:

- **Protein Power:** CRB yields 50–60% protein by dry weight (FAO, 2013), with 100g providing ~55g—double beef's 25.6g (USDA, 2023). Hawaii's 15,667 homeless youth (H.B. No. 613, 2025) could benefit from this cheap, local source.
- **Nutrients:** Rich in iron (3mg/100g, 2x spinach), calcium (1.5x milk), and B12 (5x beef) (Edible Insects Review, PMC, 2021), it fights malnutrition in 10.3% of food-insecure Hawaiians (Feeding America, 2023).
- **Sustainability:** Farming CRB uses 2,000x less water and 100x fewer emissions than beef (FAO, 2013), aligning with Hawaii's 30% renewable energy (HSEO, 2024).
- **Gut Health:** Chitin (5–7% dry weight, Scientific Reports, 2018) boosts gut bacteria, cutting inflammation (TNF-alpha drop, 2018 trial)—potentially easing chronic diseases (15% diabetes rate, CDC, 2023).
- **ED Speculation:** No direct CRB-ED studies exist, but its L-arginine (nitric oxide booster) and folate (low levels tied to ED) hint at vascular benefits (Journal of Sexual Medicine, 2019). A stretch, but plausible—research could explore this further with UH's CRB colony!

Global CRB Recipes

Over a million+ people eat insects (FAO, 2013)—here's how to enjoy CRB:

1. **Thailand: CRB Stir-Fry**
 - Ingredients: 1 cup CRB (cleaned), 2 tbsp soy sauce, 1 tsp garlic, 1 tbsp oil.
 - Prep: Remove horns/wings, rinse, dry. Fry garlic in oil, add CRB, stir-fry 5–7 mins, finish with soy sauce.
 - Benefit: 15g protein/serving, omega-3s (PMC, 2021).
2. **Mexico: CRB Tacos**
 - Ingredients: ½ cup roasted CRB, 1 tbsp chili powder, lime juice, tortillas, salsa.
 - Prep: Roast CRB at 350°F for 10 mins, season with chili and lime. Serve in tortillas with salsa.
 - Benefit: 20g protein, antioxidants from salsa (Healthline, 2024).
3. **Africa: CRB Stew**
 - Ingredients: 1 cup CRB, 1 onion, 2 tomatoes, 1 tsp oil, salt.
 - Prep: Sauté onion, add tomatoes, simmer 10 mins. Add CRB, cook 15 mins, season.
 - Benefit: Iron-rich (3mg/100g, FAO), energy boost.
4. **USA: CRB Protein Bites**
 - Ingredients: ½ cup CRB powder (ground roasted CRB), ¼ cup honey, ½ cup oats.
 - Prep: Mix, form balls, chill 1 hr.
 - Benefit: 25g protein, B12 for nerves (Naak, 2019).

Why H.B. No. 643 Matters

This bill saves palms and could feed Hawaii. UH's biocontrol (viral strains by 2026) and trapping cut CRB numbers, protecting \$10M in coconuts and leveraging \$5M+ in federal funds (USDA estimate, 2023). Adding CRB as food tackles our 85% food imports (\$5B bill, DOA, 2023) and supports youth nutrition. Subsidies and training ensure residential and industry buy-in, while drones and dogs stop interisland spread—genius!

Call to Action

Fund H.B. No. 643 with \$5–10M yearly—\$2M for training, \$2M for subsidies, \$3M for response/drones, \$2M for biocontrol staff (6 FTEs). Fix the July 1, 3000, typo to 2025 to match FY 2025-2026. Explore CRB edibility with UH research—protein and ED potential await! Hawaii can lead a green, edible revolution. I'd love to discuss or share a CRB taco.

Sincerely,

Master Shelby "Pikachu" Billionaire, HRM

Ohana Unity Party, Chairman

www.Ohanaunityparty.com

Kingdom of The Hawaiian Islands, H.I.



LATE

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

March 17, 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

TESTIMONY ON HB 643, HD2
RELATING TO THE COCONUT RHINOCEROS BEETLE PROGRAM

Conference Room 224 & Videoconference
1:00 PM

Aloha Chairs Kim and Gabbard, Vice-Chairs Kidani 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 HB 643, HD2, which establishes short-term management initiatives for the coconut rhinoceros beetle response program and appropriates funds for activities and positions related to coconut rhinoceros beetle infestation control.

The coconut rhinoceros beetle (CRB) was first discovered at Malama Bay on O'ahu in December 2013. CRB feeds on and damages coconut, royal, date, and fan palms. If these preferred food sources are unavailable, CRB can shift to feed on other palms and tropical crops such as betelnut, Pandanus species, banana, pineapple, and sugarcane. CRBs use their front legs and horns to dig into the crown of trees. Then, they use their sucking mouthparts to feed on the juices in the inner spear. Adult CRB damage living palms, either killing the tree due to direct damage or opening up the tree to fatal damage from other insects or pathogens.

Coconut rhinoceros beetle detection has steadily increased. High-catch areas continue to be Pearl City Peninsula, Waipi'o Peninsula, West Loch, 'Ewa Beach, and Central O'ahu. We're seeing regular finds on the West Side of O'ahu, increased detection on the North Shore, and concerning trap finds in new areas of Laie, Kahuku, and Waimānalo. The CRB Response provides tools for community members to minimize risk and train businesses to comply with DOA's rule.

HFB agrees that we need resources to control the CRB that will protect our essential palms and crops, reduce the potential for damage to natural resources, and avoid any adverse effects on the health and safety of our residents.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

HB-643-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 12:21:05 PM

Testimony for HRE on 3/17/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Denise Boisvert	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**OMG, this crucial bill needs to be passed
*YESTERDAY!***

HB-643-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 12:22:21 PM

Testimony for HRE on 3/17/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Denise Boisvert	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

There is never as good a time like the present, as 'they' wisely say.

That said, as you contemplate the merits of this bill and whether or not you want to pass it, be reassured that, at present, at this very moment, and during the entire time of your hearing, CRB infestations on Oahu are growing exponentially.

Wish I could say, "*No pressure here!*", but alas, I couldn't, even if I tried.

Please pass this bill. Mahalo.

HB-643-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 12:39:17 PM

Testimony for HRE on 3/17/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mike Golojuch, Sr.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB643. Please pass this bill.

HB-643-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 1:29:26 PM

Testimony for HRE on 3/17/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Douglas Perrine	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The CRB is a grave threat to our environment and agriculture, and I strongly support HB643 to help contain it.

HB-643-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 7:42:25 AM

Testimony for HRE on 3/17/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dylan P. Armstrong	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in support without elaboration, none being needed.

COUNTY COUNCIL

Mel Rapozo, Chair
KipuKai Kualī'i, Vice Chair
Addison Bulosan
Bernard P. Carvalho, Jr.
Felicia Cowden
Fern Holland
Arryl Kaneshiro



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY CLERK

Jade K. Fountain-Tanigawa, County Clerk
Lyndon M. Yoshioka, Deputy County Clerk

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Council Services Division
4396 Rice Street, Suite 209
Līhu'e, Kaua'i, Hawai'i 96766

March 11, 2025

**TESTIMONY OF FELICIA COWDEN
COUNCILMEMBER, KAUAI COUNTY COUNCIL
ON
HB 643, HD 2, RELATING TO THE COCONUT RHINOCEROS BEETLE
PROGRAM
Senate Committee on Higher Education
Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment
Monday, March 17, 2025
1:00 p.m.
Conference Room 224
Via Videoconference**

Dear Chair Kim, Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in SUPPORT of HB 643, HD 2, Relating to the Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle Program. My testimony is submitted in my individual capacity as a member of the Kaua'i County Council.

Kaua'i is urgently working to eradicate the Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle that is now surfacing in various parts of the island including Kekaha, Wailua, and Kīlauea. This is a serious threat to Kaua'i's agriculture sector as well as visitor industry.

Thank you again for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 643, HD 2. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or Council Services Staff at (808) 241-4188 or via email to cokcouncil@kauai.gov.

Sincerely,

FELICIA COWDEN
Councilmember, Kaua'i County Council

AAO:mn

HB-643-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/12/2025 6:19:50 PM

Testimony for HRE on 3/17/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Uilani Naipo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In strong support of HB643 HD2.

HB-643-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/13/2025 12:29:26 AM

Testimony for HRE on 3/17/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
George M. Peavy	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In consideration of HB643 I would like to urge the Committee's approval. You have heard from the Department of Land and Natural Resources that the coconut rhinoceros beetle (CRB) is a major pest across the Pacific that threatens coconut palms in Hawaii, threatens native and in some cases limited surviving stands of endangered native Hawaiian loulo palms (*Pritchardia* sp), and has been found to attack other important native Hawaiian plants. You have heard from the Department of Agriculture, The University of Hawaii and the Invasive Species Council regarding the urgent need for control and prevention of further spread to the outer islands, and the need for tools to better attack the problem where infestations occur.

It only took 11 years from the initial infestation on Oahu to engulf the whole island. We have seen the effects of inadequate methods and ineffective tools to confine and eradicate CRB on Oahu, and now we have early spread to Kauai, Maui and the Big Island. Strong steps need to be taken to curb the spread of CRB on the neighbor islands, and more effective tools and strategies developed to control CRB where infestations occur. This will be a long term battle and will only get worse if investments in expanding control efforts and the development of more effective tools are not made now. Please, support this legislation.

HB-643-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/14/2025 8:52:39 AM

Testimony for HRE on 3/17/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jeff Marcus	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

ATTENTION CHAIR KAHALOA AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS.

Thanks for the opportunity to show support for HB 643 relating to Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle program.

We need assurances and effort to protect the islands not yet overrun by the beetle, My focus is on the Big Island and hopefully funding and a plan for eradication can be put forth.

As a 37yr Nurseryman owning Floribunda Palms and have a private seed producing collection of over 800 species of palms on my property I strongly support this bill and any positive action our legislature can take to help the spread of this beetle. Thank You.

Jeff Marcus owner of Floribunda Palms