

**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**  
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**TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD  
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

**BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT  
AND HIGHER EDUCATION**

**MONDAY, APRIL 14, 2025  
1:45 PM  
CONFERENCE ROOM 225 & VIDEOCONFERENCE**

**HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 130, HD1  
URGING THE STATE, COUNTIES, AND OTHER RELEVANT AGENCIES TO  
PROVIDE INCREASED AND SUSTAINED FUNDING TO THE INVASIVE SPECIES  
COMMITTEES WITHIN THE PACIFIC COOPERATIVE STUDIES UNIT OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII' I AT MĀNOA.**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Concurrent Resolution 130, HD1, urging the State, Counties, and other relevant agencies to provide increased and sustained funding to the invasive species committees within the Pacific Cooperative Studies Unit (PCSU) of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

The Department agrees that the island invasive species committees (ISCs) are an important component of biosecurity for the State. The Department notes that the Hawaii Invasive Species Council already provides funding to the ISCs annually with the vast majority of the annual allocation provided by the legislature already being awarded to PCSU projects, including the ISCs. As the entire Department's total budget is less than .4% of the State budget, without additional resource allocations, providing sustained, let alone increased funding will be an on-going challenge.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.





The Senate  
Committee on Agriculture and Environment  
Committee on Higher Education  
Monday, April 14, 2025  
1:45 p.m. Conference Room 225 & Videoconference  
State Capitol

### **Testimony in Support of HCR 130 HD 1**

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

The Coordinating Group on Alien Pest Species (CGAPS) is **in support of HCR 130 HD 1**, which urges the counties, the State, and other relevant agencies to provide increased and sustained funding to the Invasive Species Committees and the Hawaii Ant Lab within the Pacific Cooperative Studies Unit of the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

As noted in HCR 130 HD 1, the island-based Invasive Species Committees (ISCs) and the Hawaii Ant Lab (HAL) serve critical roles in responding to invasive species by addressing localized invasive species threats and ensuring that control efforts are aligned with the unique needs of each county, maximizing the effectiveness of their very limited resources. In addition to the actual boots-on-the-ground invasive species control actions carried out by the ISCs and HAL, they are also amazing at community outreach and education. From the voluntary Plant Pono nursery endorsement program to assist nurseries in ensuring they do not accidentally spread invasive species and residents in making good planting choices, to ongoing efforts to directly educate the public, including residents of impacted communities, about little fire ant (LFA), to offering in-person or on-line presentations tailored for local meetings and events, among many other initiatives, the ISCs and HAL are out in their communities providing information and education about invasive species impacts. In addition, HAL is a world leader on LFA management and is continually researching new methods to manage invasive ants.

They do all of this on a very limited budget. The ISCs and HAL are grant-funded year to year. We greatly appreciate HCR 130 HD 1 for recognizing the critical role the ISCs and HAL play in invasive species prevention and response in Hawaii and urging the counties and the State, including the Department of Agriculture and Department of Land and Natural Resources, to provide sustained funding to them to strengthen their ability to combat impacts of invasive species and protect Hawaii's ecosystems and economy.

Mahalo for the opportunity to support HCR 130 HD 1.

Aloha,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Christy Martin".

Christy Martin  
CGAPS Program Manager

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Stephanie Easley".

Stephanie Easley  
CGAPS Legal Fellow



**UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM**

**‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII**

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

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Testimony Presented Before the  
Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment  
Senate Committee on Higher Education  
Monday, April 14, 2025 at 1:45 p.m.

By  
Philip Williams  
Acting Dean  
College of Natural Sciences  
And  
Michael Bruno, Provost  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

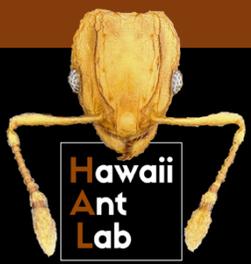
HCR 130 HD1 – URGING THE STATE, COUNTIES, AND OTHER RELEVANT AGENCIES TO PROVIDE INCREASED AND SUSTAINED FUNDING TO THE INVASIVE SPECIES COMMITTEES AND HAWAII ANT LAB WITHIN THE PACIFIC COOPERATIVE STUDIES UNIT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII AT MĀNOA

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

The University of Hawai'i supports HCR 130 HD1 that recognizes the critical importance of addressing the growing threat of invasive species in Hawai'i.

As the home to unique and fragile ecosystems, Hawaii's biodiversity is not only a natural treasure but also a cornerstone of the State's economy, supporting agriculture, tourism, and the overall well-being of its communities. The efforts of the Invasive Species Committees and Hawai'i Ant Lab are essential in protecting these ecosystems and mitigating the long-term economic and ecological impacts of invasive species. By supporting sustained funding and expanding research and management programs, we ensure that Hawai'i remains resilient in the face of these challenges, safeguarding our environment, industries, and future generations.

The University is committed to playing an active role in this effort and fully endorses this resolution.



Hawai'i State Senate  
Committees on  
Agriculture and the Environment  
Higher Education

April 14, 2025  
1:45p  
Hawaii State Capitol Conference Room 225

**SUBJECT: Testimony – In Support of HCR 130\_HD1**

Dear Chairs, Vice Chairs, and Committee Members of the AEN and HRE

The Hawai'i Ant Lab (HAL) is grateful for the opportunity to submit this testimony in support of HCR 130\_HD1 *“Urging the State, Counties, and other relevant agencies to provide increased and sustained funding to the invasive species committees and Hawai'i Ant Lab within the Pacific Cooperative Studies Unit of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa”*.

Invasive species negatively impact all aspects of life in Hawai'i from residential quality of life, touristic impressions of what Hawai'i is, agriculture sustainability and self sufficiency, and natural resources such as our watersheds, reefs, and endemic flora and fauna. The battle against invasive species is too great for any one agency or entity to take on their own and interagency collaborations are imperative for success. Projects administered by the University of Hawaii Pacific Cooperative Studies Unit (PCSU; including but not limited to island Invasive Species Committees, and Hawai'i Ant Lab) act as essential “gap filling” organizations when government agencies lack capacity or expertise to address high priority invasive species and biosecurity issues. PCSU projects act through extensive outreach education campaigns, on-the-ground control efforts, and research to improve understanding and existing invasive species management tools. Through this work, PCSU projects provide job opportunities for upcoming generations to gain experience in biosecurity, conservation, resource management, and invasive species related fields and ensuring this work is perpetuated.

However, these gap filling projects are funded through annual competitive grants and our work is prioritized and guided based on these grants. Target species, control strategies, location of control efforts, data sharing criteria, etc... shift from one grant to another. This leads to uncertainty of long term success, inability to fill gaps that lie outside of current funding objectives, and decreasing of coordinated efforts between government agencies and PCSU projects.

Long term sustained funding from County and State agencies for ongoing control efforts on high priority target pests would ensure interagency cooperative initiatives and are not displaced with shifting funding sources.

Our only suggestion is to change the language of this resolution to include all gap filling projects under the PCSU.

Regards,  
Dr. Michelle Montgomery PhD  
Manager – Hawaii Ant Lab



The Senate  
Committee on Agriculture and Environment  
Committee on Higher Education  
Monday, April 14, 2025  
1:45 p.m. Conference Room 225 & Videoconference State Capitol

### **Testimony in Support of HCR 130 HD 1**

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

The Maui Invasive Species Committee (MISC) strongly supports HCR 130 HD 1, which urges the Counties, State, and other relevant agencies to provide increased and sustained funding to the Invasive Species Committees (ISCs) and the Hawai'i Ant Lab (HAL), both projects of the University of Hawai'i - Pacific Cooperative Studies Unit. The island-based Invasive Species Committees and HAL provide essential capacity and expertise in containment and eradication. They serve as a critical line of defense when species are detected outside the ports and harbors, where they impact residents, farmers, natural areas, and businesses.

The ISCs were created to address gaps in jurisdiction and capacity. Unlike many state or federal agencies limited by land type, industry, or function, the ISCs are species-led and go where the threat is. This flexibility allows for rapid response to new threats and long-term suppression where needed. Examples abound of an ISC mobilizing quickly to meet a new threat, such as little fire ants, coconut rhinoceros beetles, or devil weed: trained crews sprang into action, delimiting infestations, initiating control, and launching public awareness campaigns.

The "Committee" part of the ISCs' name reflects how they work. State, county, and federal agencies are at the table, contributing their expertise and aligning efforts. The ISC programs benefit from the collective insight of agricultural experts, conservationists, researchers, and community leaders. Survey and treatment strategies are developed in concert with partners and honed through hands-on experience in the communities where they work.

Eradication and containment efforts are complex, often requiring years of repeat visits and close coordination with landowners. Local relationships matter. The ISCs build trust over time—offering educational resources, responding to community calls for help, and returning to neighborhoods with tools and answers. The little fire ant (LFA) team on Maui includes 6-8 full time staff, a detector dog team, and seasonal interns. Although the program is operating at full tilt, increased capacity is needed to stay ahead of this aggressive pest. This scale of response on

Maui would not be possible without the extraordinary support of the County of Maui. We strongly support this Resolution. Our islands are connected; we all need to paddle together.

In addition to fieldwork, the ISCs and HAL offer impactful outreach and education to help reduce the likelihood of spreading invasive species. We conduct presentations, host an annual award, and create practical, community-based solutions—like MISC’s community coqui control program that provides training, equipment, and support, helping different neighborhoods bring back their quiet nights.

The ISC programs also provide career pathways in conservation and agriculture, with entry points for those with high school diplomas or college degrees, and opportunities for advancement into professional roles. We are proud to see former Maui and Molokai staff in leadership positions, with examples including state fire protection forester, agriculture inspector, island coordinator for the plant extinction prevention program, and state representative. We are helping to keep talent and passion here in the islands.

The Hawai’i Ant Lab provides vital, world-class research that underpins statewide efforts on little fire ants. Without their expertise, it would have been game over long ago for efforts to prevent the establishment of LFA statewide.

Despite all this positive impact, the ISCs and HAL operate entirely on soft, year-to-year funding. The programs face perennial uncertainty that hampers hiring, procurement, long-term planning, and morale. HCR 130 HD 1 recognizes that stable, predictable, and adequate funding for those on the front lines is needed to protect agriculture, native ecosystems, our economy, and way of life.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of HCR 130 HD 1.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Teya M. Penniman', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the left.

Teya M. Penniman  
Special Projects Director

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April 11, 2025

Committee on Agriculture and Environment Committee on Higher Education  
RE: HCR130\_HD1

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

On behalf of the Big Island Invasive Species Committee, I would like to express our strong support as well as our deep appreciation for the proposed resolution supporting the work of the ISCs.

The ISCs are the glue in the seams between the various state, federal and county entities participating in any invasive species response. As a second-line of defense, our highly-trained staff can pivot quickly to provide response capacity for new pests that slip past our borders, whether they be plant or insect. In 2021, when devil weed appeared on the Big Island for the first time, BIISC quickly engaged in a response: reaching out to the Oahu crews for guidance on the best treatment, training our crew to identify and control the plant, delimiting the known population, and launching a massive outreach campaign to find any additional sites. Similarly, when coconut rhinoceros beetle was detected on the Big Island, we collaborated with the CRB Response team to create island-appropriate outreach materials, began holding public meetings and trainings, and immediately launched a community-host trapping program to expand early detection capabilities.

ISCs often serve as the front line for communications about invasive species for the public, having spent years building relationships in communities by offering free resources, trainings, and education to our residents on the invasive species problems that most affect them - little fire ant, coqui, albizia, rat lungworm, and more - before we return to those communities to request help with a new species. We offer positive alternatives to invasives, such as the Plant Pono program, which helps home gardeners select the right non-invasive plant for their home and community, and provides free native plant education classes - that come with a free native plant! Through Plant Pono, we have cultivated relationships with nurseries, landscapers, and other green-industry entities that allows us to quickly mobilize these key partners when a new pest makes an appearance, as we have seen recently with CRB.

Our status as part of the University of Hawai'i allows us to come up with creative, collaborative projects like these that do not fall under the mandate of any state agency. Making connections with community members also provides us the opportunity to stress the importance of early detection and reporting for new species. Just recently we completed a collaborative project with one of our Big Island communities in rural Puna, addressing the horribly thorny Himalayan raspberry that is aggressively spreading in their area. The homeowners association reached out begging for help. All of the resources available for controlling raspberry were over 20 years old, and geared toward large landowners with teams of workers, not homeowners trying to combat this problem in their own backyards and roadsides. Working with volunteer residents, our team applied trials of various treatments - some new to the market - and spent a year tracking the results, which we will be sharing with the community in a public meeting next month. We

helped the community association acquire the proper PPE and equipment needed for dealing with thickets of thorns and build a community “lending library” of tools.

The ISCs also serve an important role in workforce development, offering fulfilling jobs that keep our young people in the islands and allow them to engage in the critical work of protecting our island resources. Entry-level ISC staff can enter natural resources with only a high school diploma. We are heavily focused on safety and training, and so many of our field crew members go on to work for other state and federal programs, utilizing the foundation they built as part of an ISC. Within our organizations, we offer more advanced positions for those with associate’s, bachelor’s, and master’s degrees.

Increasing funding to the ISCs means increased resources for fighting the spread, establishment, and associated threats of high-priority pests across the state, as well as expanding capacity to manage existing pest populations. Even for species considered too widespread for eradication, there is still immense value in working to prevent further spread and supporting our communities by mitigating the impacts. Successful containment can protect other islands and other regions within an island, which can lead to substantial cost-savings at local and state levels. The more we dedicate to managing existing populations of established high-priority pests, the higher the likelihood that eradication again becomes feasible in future years.

Thank you for your support of this resolution.

Mahalo,



Franny Kinslow Brewer

Program Manager

Big Island Invasive Species Committee

fbrewer@hawaii.edu

**HCR-130-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/14/2025 7:58:29 AM

Testimony for AEN on 4/14/2025 1:45:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Sherry Pollack	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in strong support of HCR 130HD1 which urges increased and sustained funding to the invasive species committees and Hawai'i ant lab within the Pacific Cooperative Studies Unit of the University of Hawaii. Increasing funding will provide more resources to the agencies with expertise in mitigating the spread, establishment, and associated threats of high-priority pests across the State. These efforts towards stronger action to mitigate or prevent the worst 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 are critical.

Please pass this measure. Mahalo.