



# 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  
House Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems  
Friday, March 21, 2025 at 10:00 a.m.

By

Philip Williams

Acting Dean

College of Natural Sciences

And

Michael Bruno, Provost

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

HCR 130/HR 126 – 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 AT MĀNOA

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

The University of Hawai'i supports HCR 130/HR 126 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 (ISCs) 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 Hawaii 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 these resolutions.

JOSH GREEN  
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII

SYLVIA LUKE  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



## HAWAII INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL

1151 PUNCHBOWL ST, #325  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

### VOTING MEMBERS

DAWN CHANG  
DEPARTMENT OF LAND & NATURAL  
RESOURCES

SHARON HURD  
HAWAII DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

KATHLEEN HO, D.Env  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

PARWINDER GREWAL, Ph.D.  
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

MARY ALICE EVANS  
BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT &  
TOURISM

DEXTER KISHIDA  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

**Chelsea Arnott, HISC Coordinator on behalf of  
HISC Co-Chair Sharon Hurd and Co-Chair Dawn N.S. Chang**

**House Committees on  
AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS  
Friday, March 21, 2025  
10:00 AM**

**State Capitol, Conference Room 325 and Via Videoconference**

**In consideration of  
HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 130  
RELATING TO BIOSECURITY, INVASIVE SPECIES COMMITTEES, FUNDING**

House Concurrent Resolution 130:

- Urges the State, counties, and other relevant agencies to provide increased and sustained funding to the Invasive Species Committees (ISCs) within the Pacific Cooperative Studies Unit (PCSU) of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UH Mānoa);
- Urges the counties, State, and other relevant agencies, including the Department of Agriculture and Department (HDOA) of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR), to provide sustained funding to the ISCs to strengthen their ability to combat the growing threat of invasive species and protect Hawaii's ecosystems and economy;
- Moves that funding be directed toward expanding invasive species control programs to target priority species, increasing research and monitoring efforts to detect new invasions early, enhancing public outreach and education to raise awareness about preventing the spread of invasive species, supporting interagency and community collaboration to improve response coordination and resource-sharing, and providing treatment options for residents and farmers impacted by these species, including grants for control efforts and the purchase of treatment supplies; and
- Moves that certified copies of this Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Governor; Chairperson of the Board of Agriculture; Chairperson of the Board of Land and Natural Resources; Director of the PCSU of UH Mānoa; and Mayors of the Counties of Maui, Kauai, and Hawaii and Mayor of the City and County of Honolulu.

**The Hawai'i Invasive Species Council (Council) supports this Resolution.**

Over the past year numerous events have elevated the critical need to support and collaborate with partner agencies as part of successful invasive species management, and the ISCs have been at the center of response efforts. For example, The Council led in the establishment of a multi-agency (DLNR, HDOA, UH and ISCs) Memorandum of Understanding to address the high-priority pests of Little Fire Ant, Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle, and Coqui frog. The Council has supported its partners, including the ISCs, through our grant funding award program. The ISCs also perform critical collaborative efforts through their on-the-ground management of invasive species, which oftentimes is work government partners (Federal, State, and County) are not resourced to undertake.

The Council supports this Resolution to ensure that Counties, the State, and other relevant agencies provide critical operating funds for the five Hawaiian island ISCs. Currently, HB 299 which if passed would provide additional funding to the Council, and possibly the ISCs through the Council's grant award program. Despite this funding and other Federal funds the ISCs earn, a larger and more stable source of funds is needed. ISCs oftentimes conduct fieldwork quicker and more efficiently than government partners (HDOA, DLNR, Counties), and that this work can occur in hard-to-reach mountainous and forested areas. ISCs also provide expert guidance to Counties, the State, and related partners to ensure all operations are successful.

The Council supports this Resolution given the constant threat of invasive species to Hawaii's environment, tourism industry, agriculture production, and health and standard-of-living of residents. There have been many successful ISC interventions, however, the reality is that significant more funding is needed on a consistent basis to help prevent, detect, control, and hopefully eradicate invasive species for the benefit of all Hawaiians, residents, and visitors.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this measure.

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

SYLVIA LUKE  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAI'I  
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA

P.O. BOX 621  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

Testimony of  
DAWN N. S. CHANG  
Chairperson

Before the House Committee on  
AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

Friday, March 21, 2025  
10:00 AM

State Capitol, Conference Room 325, and Via Videoconference

In consideration of  
HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 130  
HOUSE RESOLUTION 126  
RELATING TO BIOSECURITY, INVASIVE SPECIES COMMITTEES,  
FUNDING

House Concurrent Resolution 130 urges the State, counties, and other relevant agencies to provide increased and sustained funding to the Invasive Species Committees (ISCs) within the Pacific Cooperative Studies Unit (PCSU) of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UH Mānoa).

**The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports this measure.**

The Department supports this bill to help the island ISCs obtain much-needed funding. ISCs perform an important gap-filling role in addressing invasive species that the Department does not have the staff, resources, or funding to conduct. For example, The O'ahu ISC has recently been instrumental in helping the Department develop its response to incipient Little Fire Ant and Coqui frog infestations on the windward side of O'ahu. The Big Island ISC has been a willing and helpful partner in the emergency response to the recent Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle detections in Kona. The Kaua'i ISC has led efforts to develop a Little Fire Ant Response Plan on Kaua'i as part of the High-Priority Pest Memorandum of Understanding entered by the Department, the University of Hawai'i, and the Department of Agriculture. The Maui ISC has led the way with an innovative aerial treatment for Little Fire Ants, and the Moloka'i ISC is exemplary in its efforts to prevent new invasive species from entering Moloka'i despite staffing challenges.

The Department supports the Resolution's intent to ensure all partners, including the State, Counties, and others, are activated to support the ISCs. The Department also supports HB 299 as it makes its way through the legislature. HB 299 would increase the budget of the Hawaii Invasive

DAWN N.S. CHANG  
CHAIRPERSON  
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE  
MANAGEMENT  
RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE  
FIRST DEPUTY  
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DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER  
AQUATIC RESOURCES  
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION  
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES  
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ENFORCEMENT  
ENGINEERING  
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION  
LAND  
STATE PARKS

Species Council (HISC), administered by the Department, and this increase in state funds could be used to leverage grant funding awards for ISCs. The ISCs can use this HISC funding to help secure federal funds. However, with an uncertain federal funding outlook, state, county, and partner funds are critical to ensure the ISCs have an adequate and consistent funding source. The ISCs perform work that the Department and other State agencies cannot perform due to State funding and staffing capacity.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this measure.

**BOARD OF WATER SUPPLY  
KA 'OIHANA WAI  
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU**

630 SOUTH BERETANIA STREET • HONOLULU, HAWAII 96843  
Phone: (808) 748-5000 • boardofwatersupply.com

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March 21, 2025

The Honorable Kirstin Kahaloe, Chair  
and Members  
House Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems  
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 325  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Chair Kahaloe and Members:

Subject: House Concurrent Resolution 130: 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 Hawai'i at Mānoa

The Honolulu Board of Water Supply (BWS) supports House Concurrent Resolution (HCR) 130, which urges 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 Hawai'i at Manoa.

BWS actively supports the protection and management of forested watersheds through invasive species control to ensure groundwater and surface water resources are sustained. BWS annually provides around \$1,272,781 in direct contributions to watershed partnerships including the Oahu Invasive Species Committee. We have prioritized Oahu's watersheds based on recharge and source production and annually funds watershed partnerships and the Oahu Invasive Species Council for on the ground watershed management activities, fencing and invasive species control to improve the health of Oahu's forest reserves.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony in support of HCR 130.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ernest Y. W. Lau', written in a cursive style.

ERNEST Y. W. LAU, P.E.  
Manager and Chief Engineer

A small, stylized handwritten mark or signature in blue ink, located at the bottom right of the page.

**HR-126**

Submitted on: 3/20/2025 9:02:41 AM

Testimony for AGR on 3/21/2025 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Tiffani Keanini	Kauai Invasive Species Committee	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The Kauai Invasive Species Committee (KISC) is **in support of HCR130 & HR126**. KISC appreciates the legislature's focus on biosecurity and invasive species this legislative session.



House of Representatives  
Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems  
Friday, March 21, 2025  
10:00AM Conference Room 325  
State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street  
Honolulu, HI 96813

**SUBJECT: Testimony – In Support of HCR 130 “Urging Increased and Sustained Funding to the Invasive Species Committees”**

Aloha Chair Kahaloa, Vice Chair Kusch, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing on behalf of the O’ahu Invasive Species Committee (OISC) **in strong support of HCR 130 which urges increased and sustained funding to the Invasive Species Committees (ISCs) within the Pacific Cooperative Studies Unit (PCSU) of the University of Hawai’i (UH).**

Increasing funding to the ISCs 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 resources would be used for early detection and rapid-response (EDRR) efforts to pests that are likely to arrive in Hawai’i. Should any of those species make it past border inspection, EDRR actions will be crucial in ensuring the success of containment and eradication. Increased efforts for public reporting of pests, staff capacity to respond, and the necessary supplies and equipment will better protect our islands from the constant threats of incoming injurious species.

Increased resources will also expand capacity to manage existing pest populations. While some species are considered too widespread to eradicate, there is still immense value in dedicating resources to prevent further spread. Successful containment can protect other islands and other regions within an island from suffering the repercussions of an infestation, which can lead to substantial cost-savings at local and State levels. It can also save homeowners from needing to spend more on protection of private assets. 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.

As a completely soft-funded agency, OISC and the other ISCs would benefit greatly from sustained funding. Even temporary interruptions in funding can determine the success of a pest-response. Ensuring that these organizations have access to funding that can be counted on year-to-year allows for more efficient strategic planning and will increase the likelihood of eradication for high-priority pests. The lack of sustained funding has impacted OISC’s ability to plan more than a year in advance and expend a lot of our existing resources toward fundraising for future efforts. Reducing this need will allow for better management of invasive species and biosecurity statewide.

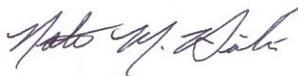
The ISCs are the second layer of protection when priority pests make it past inspection at the border and begin to establish in people's backyards and on commercial properties. These agencies work to contain and eradicate some of the world's worst invasive species according to the Global Invasive Species Database (GISD). Funds are not only used for field action, but also for public awareness and outreach efforts that are key to successful control. The ISCs protect our State from the continued threats of species like little fire ant, coqui frog, miconia, devil weed, Rapid 'Ōhi'a Death (ROD) and others.

In providing relief to homeowners and business owners by using public funds to work across private properties, the ISCs act as an important extension of State and County efforts. The ISCs work in areas where other agencies cannot. Other agencies cannot work on certain private lands, whether that is because of agency mandates or because capacity is limited. Our military partner agencies, for example, are limited to controlling invasive species on military or adjacent parcels. Some teams at the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) are limited to working only on or adjacent to Forest Reserves and Natural Area Reserves. However, the ISCs are specifically set up to respond to priority pests regardless of property boundaries.

By working in backyards and across the low-elevation forest, the ISCs help protect our priority watershed areas by dealing with these pests before they are able to establish in high-value forest. If the ISCs were not able to respond to these species and they then establish in State Forest Reserves or Natural Area Reserves, they would become the responsibility of DLNR. The same can be said for high-value tourist areas. Tourism, transportation, human health, marine ecosystems, and other areas of importance rely on biosecurity and support from the ISCs. Expanding the ability of the ISCs to protect more areas and from more threats with increased and sustained funding will help better protect the State and Counties. This would also lead to substantial cost savings, both in terms of impacts from pests that reduce expected tourism dollars, as well as increased costs to manage pests as populations grow.

OISC is grateful for the continued support from all State departments, the legislature, and the members of this Committee. Invasive species will continue to be a threat to our economy, watersheds, and our way of life. Thank you for your time and consideration on this matter.

Sincerely,



Nate Dube  
OISC Manager  
[oiscmgr@hawaii.edu](mailto:oiscmgr@hawaii.edu)



Hawai'i State Senate  
Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems

March 21, 2025  
10:00a  
Hawaii State Capitol Conference Room 325

**SUBJECT: Testimony – In Support of HR 126 and HCR 130 (companion)**

Dear Chair Kahaloa, Vice Chair Kusch, and members of the AGR Committee

The Hawai'i Ant Lab (HAL) is grateful for the opportunity to submit this testimony in support of HR 126 and HCR 130 *“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”*.

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, Watershed Partnerships, and the 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.

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

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**HR-126**

Submitted on: 3/20/2025 10:15:59 AM

Testimony for AGR on 3/21/2025 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Micah Brodsky	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strongly Support