

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR OF
HAWAII



SUZANNE D. CASE
CHAIRPERSON
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

ROBERT K. MASUDA
FIRST DEPUTY

M. KALEO MANUEL
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

AQUATIC RESOURCES
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS
CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES ENFORCEMENT
ENGINEERING
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES

POST OFFICE BOX 621
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

Testimony of
SUZANNE D. CASE
Chairperson

Before the Senate Committee on
WAYS AND MEANS

Wednesday, February 23, 2022
10:05 AM

State Capitol, Conference Room 211, Via Videoconference

In consideration of
SENATE BILL 2996
RELATING TO ANTS

Senate Bill 2996 proposes to appropriate \$600,000 to the Department of Land and Natural Resources (LNR402) for research, extension, and control of the little fire ants and other harmful ants. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports this measure.**

The little fire ant costs upwards of \$200 million per year to manage on Hawai'i Island alone and new invasive ant threats like red imported fire ants, which are not currently present in Hawai'i, have similar costs associated with their management elsewhere. The Hawai'i Ant Lab (HAL) has a statewide mission to prevent the entry of invasive ants into Hawai'i and to manage those that are already established. Invasive ants harm our native wildlife and can impede local food production and harm pets with their aggressive stinging. The program is a point-of-contact for the public, state, and federal conservation agencies, and a large component of the program is devoted to the management and control of little fire ants throughout the state.

Currently, HAL has no source of stable funding for their operations and last year experienced significant budget cuts that have resulted in staff working at decreased capacity to stretch funding over a longer period. This is happening at a critical time with increased detections of little fire ant infestations occurring across the state. The potential for widespread establishment is a possibility without continued and dedicated rapid response/treatment. The appropriation in this measure would directly support HAL through the Department's LNR 402.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this measure.

DAVID Y. IGE
Governor

JOSH GREEN
Lt. Governor



PHYLLIS SHIMABUKURO-GEISER
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

MORRIS M. ATTA
Deputy to the Chairperson

State of Hawaii
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
1428 South King Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96814-2512
Phone: (808) 973-9600 FAX: (808) 973-9613

**TESTIMONY OF PHYLLIS SHIMABUKURO-GEISER
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

**BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON
WAYS AND MEANS**

FEBRAURY 23, 2022

10:05 A.M.

CONFERENCE ROOM 211 & VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

**SENATE BILL NO. 2996
RELATING TO ANTS**

Chairperson Dela Cruz and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 2996, relating to ants. The bill appropriates funds from general fund for fiscal year 2022-2023 to be expended by the Department of Land and Natural Resources to fund for the research, extension and control of the little fire ant and other harmful ant species. The Department supports this measure.

Invasive species are a primary threat to Hawai'i's agriculture and economy. Funding for control of invasive species is critical to ensure that appropriate responses can be implemented and maintained which mitigate negative impacts on agriculture, the environment, and the economy.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR



CRAIG K. HIRAI
DIRECTOR

GLORIA CHANG
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM
HAWAII EMPLOYER-UNION HEALTH BENEFITS TRUST FUND
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
P.O. BOX 150
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96810-0150

ADMINISTRATIVE AND RESEARCH OFFICE
BUDGET, PROGRAM PLANNING AND
MANAGEMENT DIVISION
FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION DIVISION
OFFICE OF FEDERAL AWARDS MANAGEMENT (OFAM)

WRITTEN ONLY
TESTIMONY BY CRAIG K. HIRAI
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
ON
SENATE BILL NO. 2996

February 23, 2022
10:05 a.m.
Room 211 and Videoconference

RELATING TO ANTS

The Department of Budget and Finance (B&F) offers comments on this bill.

Senate Bill No. 2996 appropriates \$600,000 in general funds for FY 23 to be expended by the Department of Land and Natural Resources for research, extension, and control of the little fire ant and other harmful ant species.

B&F notes that, with respect to the general fund appropriation in this bill, the federal Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act requires that states receiving Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) II funds and Governor's Emergency Education Relief II funds must maintain state support for:

- Elementary and secondary education in FY 22 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for elementary and secondary education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19; and
- Higher education in FY 22 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for higher education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19.

Further, the federal American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act requires that states receiving ARP ESSER funds must maintain state support for:

- Elementary and secondary education in FY 22 and FY 23 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for elementary and secondary education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19; and
- Higher education in FY 22 and FY 23 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for higher education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19.

The U.S. Department of Education has issued rules governing how these maintenance of effort (MOE) requirements are to be administered. B&F will be working with the money committees of the Legislature to ensure that the State of Hawai'i complies with these ESSER MOE requirements.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

SB-2996

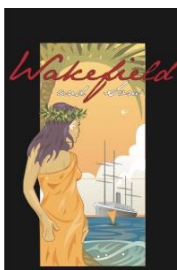
Submitted on: 2/20/2022 6:22:57 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/23/2022 10:05:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Mary Beth Jiko Nakade	Testifying for Daifukuji Soto Mission	Support	No

Comments:

Daifukuji Soto Mission, a community gathering place, has greatly benefitted from the excellent services provided by the Hawaii Ant Lab. Heather Forester gave a presentation on LFA control to members of our Kona community at Daifukuji several years ago. In addition, Kiyoshi Adachi of Ant Lab Kona has provided our temple and our neighbors with in-person educational presentations and ongoing support and encouragement in our battle against the Little Fire Ants. These resources have been very valuable. For the sake of our community, we wish to support Senate Bill 2996.



Wakefield & Sons, Inc
DBA Ho'omalulu Farm, Wakefield Coffee, and Pea Nani Farm
PO Box 1454
Kealahou, Hawaii 96750

February 21, 2022

Dear Finance and Ways & Means committees,

My husband, Bill, and I have been successfully farming in Kona over 40 years, and derive 100% of our income from our farms, true farmers. We have a conventional coffee and avocado farm, and 2 certified organic farms, We have also served on the board of directors of the Hawaii Avocado Association, HAA, for many years.

We are writing this letter in support of House Bill 1518 and Senate Bill 2996. The Hawaii Ant Lab is truly a valuable asset to our agricultural community and residents of Hawaii.

The Hawaii Ant Lab has helped us as farmers for several years. We must eradicate this horrendous pest! If not, it will be extremely difficult to farm. I have been bitten by these Little Fire Ants, LFA, and so understand why we can not find workers to help us in the fields where the LFA are established.

We need the Ant Lab for:

- **research, extension, and control** of the little fire ant and other harmful ants. This Bill would assist the lab to resume running at full capacity. **Extension support** to residents and agricultural industries affected by invasive ants.
- **Early detection programs and eradication plans** on neighbor islands to prevent the intra and inter-island spread of Little Fire Ants (LFA) in Hawaii.
- **Research and development** of effective and innovative methods for the control of LFA. This ongoing process makes HAL the leading agency on LFA management strategies in the world.

We have received much needed help from our Ant Lab specialist, Kiyoshi Adachi. Two of our farms have had the Little Fire Ant, LFA, infestations. We feel extremely fortunate to have had Kiyoshi and the Ant Lab Specialist from Hilo's support. They have each given educational presentations to our two different farming community members, which many farmers and residents attended. One community completely eradicated the LFA, and the other is still working on it. We also know of several resident friends that have used and are still using the Ant Lab's help. One neighbor was totally in denial, until the Ant Lab identified the ants as LFA. They are now ant free.

With our state encouraging food sustainability, it is extremely important

Hawaii's agricultural industry and residents do and will greatly benefit from having the Hawaii Ant Lab's help, support, and education!

PLEASE support House Bill 1518 and Senate Bill 2996 to help secure the future of farming in our state, as this is certainly a particularly dire situation, that has not only impacted our island's economy, but also the livelihood and lifestyle of our island community.

As Hawaii Island is a great agricultural community, the Ant Lab is an invaluable resource. We need them to secure the future of farming on our island.

Sincerely and with aloha,

Bill and Helen "Brooks" Wakefield

Ho'omalulu Farm, Pea Nani Farm, Wakefield Coffee, Wakefield & Sons, Inc.

President and VP of Wakefield & Sons, Inc.

bwake@hawaii.rr.com Phone: 808-329-9729

SB-2996

Submitted on: 2/21/2022 9:36:03 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/23/2022 10:05:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Frank W. Hustace III	Testifying for Stop LFA Kohala	Support	No

Comments:

February 21, 2022

Dear Members of the Ways and Means Committee:

My name is Frank W. Hustace III, and I am the president of Stop LFA Kohala, a grassroots, community project under the fiscal umbrella of the North Kohala Community Resource Center, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization.

Stop LFA Kohala was formed several years ago to meet the challenge of LFA in Hawi, Kapa'au and other communities in the North Kohala region.

The work of the Hawai'i Ant Lab has been essential to our work. The staff has never failed to answer our call for information and practical help to mitigate the LFA threat. An emergency community meeting where Hawai'i Ant Lab staff made a presentation, drew over 300 residents.

Of immediate concern is a severe, uncontrolled outbreak of LFA in the Ho'ea Road area, about one mile from Hawi's central business district. Although the full extent of the current infestation is not precisely known, area residents estimate it may exceed 20 acres. At present, the outbreak has recently spread into a nearby gulch and is slowly spreading mauka through thick *haole koa* and undergrowth.

Owners of local restaurants, food markets, real estate offices, gift shops and adventure tourism businesses in Hawi have expressed considerable alarm about the proximity and spread of this infestation.

Stop LFA Kohala is battling the outbreak with volunteers. To date, volunteers have included members of the North Kohala Lions Club, students at Kohala High School and members of the public. The Hawai'i Ant Lab has supplied chemicals, training and equipment to support our volunteer efforts.

If left untreated, the Ho'ea Road LFA outbreak has the potential to significantly impact public health, business vitality and general quality of life for residents and visitors of North Kohala.

And this is not the only LFA infestation in Kohala. In addition to Ho'ea Road, other major "hot spots" include the Hawai'i County park at Keokea; the coastal area of Kapana'i'a, a bodysurfing beach popular with local families; the area surrounding Upolu Airport; and other residential areas. Just last week, we received a call from a resident who brought in a pickup of infested firewood from Puna.

Stop LFA Kohala has fundraised over \$20,000 which is being used to purchase equipment, chemicals and to fund public outreach about the growing LFA threat in our communities.

Without the ongoing guidance and support of the Hawai'i Ant Lab, our work at Stop LFA Kohala would be significantly weakened.

Respectfully, I ask you to fully fund SB2996. Continued and increased funding for research and practical outreach regarding invasive species -- especially the unique threat of LFA -- is absolutely essential for us in North Kohala.

Please contact me if you have questions – telephone call is best (808-640-5085). I am eager to help you understand the special challenges here in Kohala -- challenges the Hawai'i Ant Lab is uniquely qualified to help us face.

With best aloha,

Frank Hustace

President, Stop LFA Kohala

SB-2996

Submitted on: 2/21/2022 4:13:58 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/23/2022 10:05:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
keith kropf	Testifying for Manowaiopae Excellent Adventure Farm	Support	No

Comments:

We are growing fruits and vegetables on our 8 acre farm mauka Laupahoehoe on the Big Island. We have little fire ants on our farm and have been working to control them with the help of the Hawaii Ant Lab. These are annoying and somewhat dangerous pest. When my wife gets stung by them, the sting sometimes last for weeks, and she has had to get cortisone injected into the site. Please continue funding the Hawaii Ant Lab's research and outreach projects.



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

February 23, 2022

HEARING BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

TESTIMONY ON SB 2996
RELATING TO ANTS

Room 211 & Videoconference
10:05 AM

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice-Chair Keith-Agaran, 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 SB 2996, which appropriates \$600,000 to the Department of Land and Natural Resources for research, extension, and control of the little fire ant and other harmful ants.

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. We agree the Hawai'i Ant Lab's operational funding is critical to ensure that continued measures to stop the spread of little fire ants are not reduced or disrupted.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this measure.



COORDINATING GROUP ON
ALIEN PEST SPECIES

The Senate
Committee on Ways and Means
February 23, 2022
10:05 a.m. via Videoconference

Testimony in Support of SB 2996

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and Members of the Committee,

The Coordinating Group on Alien Pest Species (CGAPS) **is in strong support of SB 2996, *Relating to Ants***. The aim of this measure is to provide funding to the Department of Land and Natural Resources for work on little fire ants (LFA) and other harmful ants.

LFA were first detected on Hawai‘i island in 1999, but at that time, there were no registered ant baits for organic crops and no registered formulations and methods for applying baits to trees and foliage, there were only granular baits formulated for ground-nesting fire ant species. The Hawaii Ant Lab (HAL) was created as a partnership between the Hawai‘i Department of Agriculture and the University of Hawaii at Mānoa-Pacific Cooperative Studies Unit, with funding from a variety of sources, to fill technical and capacity gaps in responding to Little Fire Ants and other damaging ant species.

LFA’s unusual ability to nest in any protected space—on the ground, in leaf litter, or up in plants and all the way to the treetops—required specialists to do the research and development for effective control chemicals and “baits”, application tools that could stick the bait up in trees where the ants forage, and to register these new pesticides and tools for use. It is thanks to HAL that we can detect, control, and even eradicate these ants if found early enough, and HAL is working on additional tools for the toolbox.

The funding shortfall that is hitting HAL is a significant concern and CGAPS and partners are working with HAL to identify and apply for federal funds to support part of their work. However, these funds, if successful, would not become available until the summer of 2023 at earliest. We urge you to pass SB 2996 to provide gap-filling funds for work on LFA and other pest ants through DLNR. Mahalo for your consideration.

Aloha,
Christy Martin
CGAPS

LATE

SB-2996

Submitted on: 2/22/2022 10:27:19 AM
Testimony for WAM on 2/23/2022 10:05:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Susan Bassett	Testifying for Mauna Kea Cacao LLC	Support	No

Comments:

I support SB2996. The Ant Lab has helped our cacao farm enormously, providing information and follow-up so that we could successfully eradicate the Little Fire Ant (LFA) from crop areas and around our house. The Ant Lab provides continuing support in evaluating ant survey sticks so that we can quickly identify and treat if LFA come back into orchard areas. We continue to treat boundaries.

We would have ceased farming if we couldn't control LFA. Hawaii agriculture will decline without LFA control.



HAWAII PEST CONTROL ASSOCIATION

Century Square – 1188 Bishop St., Ste. 1003*Honolulu, HI 96813-3304

Telephone (808) 533-6404 • Fax (808) 533-2739

LATE

February 23, 2022

Testimony To: Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair

Presented By: Tim Lyons, CAE
Executive Director

Subject: S.B. 2996 – RELATING TO ANTS

Chair Dela Cruz and Members of the Committee:

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

Just about everyone is aware of the difficulties encountered in dealing with the little fire ant and the fact that they are very, very hard to control. We also think that most people are aware of the problems that the little fire ant causes.

Appropriate research, in order to study the biology, the feeding habits and the reproduction cycle of the little fire ant are extremely important to the actual control of the little fire ant. Structural pest control operators benefit from the research that is performed since this tends to be a local problem as opposed to one on the mainland where other research might occur.

Based on the above, we highly recommend the passage of this bill.

Thank you.

SB-2996

Submitted on: 2/19/2022 9:48:26 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/23/2022 10:05:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Douglas Perrine	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Little fire ants pose a real threat to agriculture, and are a nuisance, at a minimum, to residents of infested properties. It is not too late for the State to address this problem. Please pass SB2996

SB-2996

Submitted on: 2/21/2022 9:12:45 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/23/2022 10:05:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Alice Caddow	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

The Ant Lab provides much needed education and support for controlling the Little Fire Ant. I used their services for several years and was able to eradicate the LFA from my farm. Without their knowledge and help, I wouldn't have been able to do this. The Little Fire Ant is an noxious invasive species and it impacts the ability to farm, kills other ants, and invades people's homes. The Ant Lab needs to continue and do its research to develop effective and innovative methods to control LFA and prevent spread to neighbor islands. I understand that they are currently on a 50% involuntary furlough and this Bill will help them to resume full capacity. Please pass this bill on for a vote, we need the Ant Lab's full activity. Thank you,
Alice J. Caddow

SB-2996

Submitted on: 2/21/2022 4:12:08 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/23/2022 10:05:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Attila C. Denes	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Honorable Members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee:

I am writing in support of SB2996, which would restore funding to the Hawaii Ant Lab. As a resident of Pahoia in the Puna District of the Big Island, I can attest to the very real problem posed by Little Fire Ants (LFA's) and other invasive ant species in affected areas of our state. The staff at the Hawaii Ant Lab take a very proactive and user-friendly approach to public outreach, education, insect sample identification, and mitigation through the development of innovative and highly effective ant control strategies. I have personally attended the online version of their LFA management training course and have used the techniques taught to correctly apply insect growth regulator bait on my property. As a result, I have experienced no LFA encounters on my property, whereas many of my nearby neighbors report suffering frequent LFA bites on their untreated land. I believe that restoring the Hawaii Ant Lab's funding will benefit the citizens of Hawaii by returning the Lab's staffing levels to its pre-furlough levels, thereby making their services even more accessible. Thank you for considering my testimony in support of this bill!

Respectfully,

Attila C. Denes, Pahoia, Hawaii

SB-2996

Submitted on: 2/21/2022 8:19:53 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/23/2022 10:05:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Melody Euaparadorn	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Mahalo for accepting this testimony in favor of passing SB2996. I am testifying as a private citizen who works with Little Fire Ants on Hawaii Island. The loss of funding by the Hawaii 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 SB2996 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.

SB-2996

Submitted on: 2/21/2022 11:15:15 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/23/2022 10:05:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Raynette A. Taketa	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am in support of House Bill 1518 and Senate Bill 2996. The Hawaii Ant Lab's online class were very helpful for me with my Little Fire Ant problems in my yard and in my home. Their bites are horribly painful and nasty. My cat is partially blinded in one of his eyes because of these awful Ants. The Hawaii Ant Lab is a vital part of our community and Hawaii Island in assisting us in the fight against these Ants and other harmful ants.

SB-2996

Submitted on: 2/22/2022 11:00:43 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/23/2022 10:05:00 AM



Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Heather Forester	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Thank you for taking the time to hear SB2996 Relating to Ants. I am writing in SUPPORT of SB2996. Though ants are small in size, they pose large problems for our State. I have personally seen the devastating impacts that invasive ants cause the people, pets, and industries of Hawaii. Invasive ants, such as Little Fire Ants (LFA), are changing our way of life, and if left unchecked will forever change Hawaii as we know it.

People become desperate when trying to find solutions to manage invasive ants. Unfortunately, there is a lot of misinformation that is spread in the public realm, which can lead to pesticide misuse. People have also been known to go to the extremes of using fire to defend against ants; one such case led to a structure fire.

The Hawaii Ant Lab educates the public on best management practices that are safe and legal. The Hawaii Ant Lab needs your support to continue serving the State by helping to prevent the spread of LFA, providing education on the management of LFA and other invasive ants, and early detection of invasive ants that are not established in Hawaii.

Mahalo,

Heather Forester

LATE

SB-2996

Submitted on: 2/22/2022 11:40:05 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/23/2022 10:05:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Judith A. Fekete	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Hawaii Ant Lab testimony H1518 S2996

Our experience with Hawaii ant lab has been remarkable. Our first contact was with Heather Forester a couple years back. Her support was answered in a timely fashion, even with personal visits.

Kiyoshi Adachi of Ant Lab Kona has come over several times to provide education and ongoing support in regard to the LFA problems on our properties.

His instruction has been outstanding and he continues to keep in touch with us and help us.

Our little group has been given information with the assurance there is hope controlling LFA simply by following a protocol and encouraging our neighbors to do the same.

When we want to convince others to get on board Kiyoshi Adachi has made personal visits to address all our questions, give us facts and encouragement to keep up our efforts.

We have been using products suggested, at the times requirement, and how to apply. It's WORKING!!!

Judith A. Fekete, 73-1149D Ahikawa St, Kailua Kona HI 96740 808-640-4288

**TESTIMONY OF CASPER VANDERWOUDE
MANAGER, HAWAI'I ANT LAB, PACIFIC COOPERATIVE STUDIES UNIT, UNIVERSITY OF
HAWAII**

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

**WEDNESDAY, February 23 2022
VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE
10:05 A.M.**

**SENATE BILL NO. 2996
RELATING TO ANTS**

Chairperson Dela Cruz and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide personal testimony in support of House Bill 1518, relating to invasive ants. This bill appropriates \$600,000 to the Department of Lands and Natural Resources for research, extension, and control of the little fire ant and other harmful ants.

The little Fire Ant was first detected on the island of Hawai'i by the HDOA island entomologist in 1999. Since that time, it has spread throughout Hawai'i island and is now found on O'ahu, Maui and Kaua'i. The impact of this species on Hawai'i agriculture, tourism and residents has been profound: hampering crop productivity, stinging farm workers and domestic animals alike, affecting the daily lives of residents and tourists as well as well as threatening Hawaii's fragile ecosystems and wildlife refuges.

Since 2009 the Hawai'i Ant Lab (HAL) has provided support to affected industries and residents, developed more effective control methodologies and contributed to preventing the intra and inter-island spread of little fire ants in Hawai'i. Hal was funded entirely through non-recurring grants until 2018 when ongoing funding was provided to employ two extension staff. However, the remaining 9 staff are substantially under-funded, resulting in 50% reduction of their working hours in 2022 and potentially greater reductions expected for 2023. These reductions threaten delivery of much needed support to the people and businesses of Hawai'i, especially in agriculture.

SB2996 appropriates the funds necessary for Hawai'i Ant Lab to continue providing extension support to residents and affected agricultural industries, both on Hawai'i island and statewide; implementing early detection programs and eradication plans on O'ahu and other neighbor islands; and continuing the research program that has provided many of the control breakthroughs over the past decade. Please support this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this measure.