



2343 Rose Street, Honolulu, HI 96819
Phone: (808) 848-2074; Neighbor Islands: 1-800-482-1272
Fax: (808) 848-1921; e-mail: info@hfbf.org

TESTIMONY

HB 2504 RELATING TO INVASIVE SPECIES

Chair Tsuji and Members of the Committee:

Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation on behalf of our farmer and ranch families and organizations support HB 2504 providing for a Pest Inspection, Quarantine and Eradication Fund from deposits for nursery certification.

The industry has recognized the dire state of the State Budget. We believe that an evolution to a true fee for services structure will help ensure protection of public interests while continuing business in a timely manner. We have discussed this with our nursery operators and others that require certification. We believe this measure provides a means to move to ensure timely certifications to meet marketing needs.

HFBF strongly requests your support of this measure along with timely passage of rules and regulations so the measure can be implemented as soon as possible. If there are any questions, please contact Luella Costales at 848 2074. Thank you

Testimony of The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i
Supporting H.B. 2504 Relating to Invasive Species
House Committee on Agriculture
Wednesday, February 3, 2010, 8:30am, Rm. 312

The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i is a private non-profit conservation organization dedicated to the preservation of Hawai'i's native plants, animals, and ecosystems. The Conservancy has helped to protect nearly 200,000 acres of natural lands for native species in Hawai'i. Today, we actively manage more than 32,000 acres in 11 nature preserves on O'ahu, Maui, Hawai'i, Moloka'i, Lāna'i, and Kaua'i. We also work closely with government agencies, private parties and communities on cooperative land and marine management projects.

The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i supports H.B. 2504 Relating to Invasive Species and requiring that nursery certification fees be deposited into the pest inspection, quarantine and eradication fund to help support improved inspection capacity and services at the Department of Agriculture (HDOA).

Invasive insects, diseases, snakes, weeds, and other pests are one of the greatest threats to Hawai'i's economy, natural environment, and the health and lifestyle of its people.

The HDOA is responsible for the inspection and permitting of arriving cargo and interisland cargo shipments to protect the state from unwanted plant and animal pests and diseases. The Department developed a multi-faceted Biosecurity Plan to enhance its efforts with more inspectors, more efficient and effective inspection services, joint state-federal inspection facilities, and agreements with importers and producers for improved sanitary protocols before items are shipped to Hawai'i and between the islands. Past financial and personnel support provided by the Legislature has been essential to implementing this plan.

Unfortunately, the current budget conditions in the State have caused drastic—and potentially catastrophic—reductions in the Department's capability to inspect cargo entering and moving between the islands:

- 28 of 50 general funded inspectors have been laid off across the State;
- At Honolulu International Airport (HNL), there are now only 6 inspectors where there used to be 19; and
- Insect interceptions by inspectors at HNL have dropped from about 150 per month down to about 10 per month.

The Department's inspection capacity has dropped so far below anything that can reasonably be expected to be effective that there is a good chance that we won't know what new pest has arrived and been distributed across the islands until there is an outbreak of some kind.

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