

JAN 21 2022

S.B. NO. 2996

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO ANTS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the invasive species
2 known as the little fire ant, or *Wasmannia auropunctata*, poses a
3 threat to human health, wildlife, agriculture, and tourism. The
4 little fire was first discovered on the island of Hawaii in 1999
5 and has since spread to the islands of Kauai, Lanai, Oahu, and
6 Maui. Little fire ants possess a very painful sting that causes
7 burning and welts and can blind dogs and cats. If left
8 unmanaged, growing populations of little fire ants at hotels,
9 golf courses, and parks in the State are threats to the State's
10 residents and tourists. Little fire ants also threaten farmers,
11 who may harvest ant-infested crops, and facilitate the spread of
12 sapsucking plant pests, like mealybugs, that can decrease crop
13 yields.

14 The legislature further finds that the world-renowned
15 invasive species mitigation research being carried out by the
16 Hawaii ant lab is key to combatting the little fire ants' spread
17 in Hawaii. In 2018, due to the great demand for the lab's



1 services, the legislature appropriated \$200,000 to the
2 university of Hawaii college of tropical agriculture and human
3 resources to establish and staff an extension office of the
4 Hawaii ant lab on the island of Hawaii. Since its opening, the
5 West Hawaii office has been inundated with calls and requests
6 for assistance from the West Hawaii community. The detection
7 and eradication efforts the extension agents do is crucial to
8 controlling the spread of little fire ants on the island of
9 Hawaii.

10 The legislature recognizes that the coronavirus disease
11 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has had devastating impacts on Hawaii's
12 economy and has created additional challenges for balancing the
13 State's budget. Approximately ten per cent of public sector
14 funding has been reduced statewide, and moneys in the state
15 budget have been redirected to cover crucial programs. The
16 Hawaii ant lab has, in past years, received the majority of its
17 operational funding through the department of agriculture's pest
18 inspection, quarantine, and eradication fund. However, recent
19 funding cuts will require the Hawaii ant lab to either terminate
20 half its staff or reduce working hours by half. Either decision



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1 would significantly disrupt the office's ability to protect the
2 State from this harmful and invasive ant species.

3 The legislature acknowledges that the Hawaii ant lab
4 provides an imperative and necessary service to the people of
5 Hawaii.

6 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to appropriate
7 funds for the research, extension, and control of the little
8 fire ant and other harmful ant species.

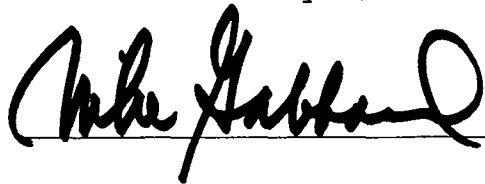
9 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general
10 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$600,000 or so much
11 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2022-2023 for
12 research, extension, and control of the little fire ant and
13 other harmful ants (LNR402).

14 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
15 land and natural resources for the purposes of this Act.

16 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2022.

17

INTRODUCED BY:



S.B. NO. 2996

Report Title:

DLNR; Little Fire Ant; Appropriation

Description:

Appropriates \$600,000 to the Department of Land and Natural Resources (LNR402) for research, extension, and control of the little fire ant and other harmful ants.

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