

Honolulu, Hawaii

FEB 11 2025

RE: S.B. No. 686
S.D. 1

Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi
President of the Senate
Thirty-Third State Legislature
Regular Session of 2025
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committees on Higher Education and Agriculture and Environment, to which was referred S.B. No. 686 entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO THE COCONUT RHINOCEROS BEETLE PROGRAM,"

beg leave to report as follows:

The purpose and intent of this measure is to:

- (1) Establish short-term management initiatives for the Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle Response Program; and
- (2) Appropriate funds to support the Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle Response Program's activities, including establishment of positions.

Your Committees received testimony in support of this measure from the Department of Land and Natural Resources, Department of Agriculture, Hawaii Invasive Species Council, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience, two members of the Kaua'i County Council, Kauai Invasive Species Committee, Big Island Invasive Species Committee, Hawai'i Farm Bureau, Environmental Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i, North Shore Chamber of Commerce, Coordinating Group on Alien Pest Species, Hawai'i Food+ Policy, and fourteen individuals.



Your Committees received comments on this measure from the Department of the Attorney General.

Your Committees find that the coconut rhinoceros beetle can have devastating impacts on palm species that are foundational to the State's agricultural economy, cultural heritage, and ecosystems. Your Committees further find that the Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle Response Program is a coordinated partnership among the University of Hawaii, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Hawaii Department of Agriculture, and other key organizations that has developed the expertise and methodology to combat and prevent infestations. Your Committees additionally find that emergency response funding from the USDA is ending as the infestation is no longer considered an emergency after ten years since initial detection in the State. Accordingly, this measure establishes and funds key positions within the Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle Response Program to ensure that infestations may continue to be combated or prevented.

Your Committees note the concern raised by the Department of the Attorney General that pursuant to the Hawaii State Constitution, this measure requires language identifying it as a law of statewide concern, and language establishing appropriate standards for state agencies to issue grants.

Accordingly, your Committees have amended this measure by:

- (1) Inserting language identifying it as a law of statewide concern;
- (2) Inserting language establishing appropriate standards for the University of Hawaii to issue grants subsidizing canopy treatment for residential palm owners and container fumigation of high-risk materials traveling between islands;
- (3) Changing the appropriations to unspecified amounts;
- (4) Inserting an effective date of July 31, 2050, to encourage further discussion; and
- (5) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity and consistency.



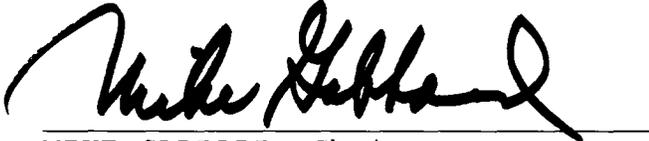
Your Committees note that this measure, as amended, contains unspecified appropriation amounts. Should your Committee on Ways and Means choose to deliberate on this measure, your Committees respectfully request that it consider appropriating the following amounts:

- (1) \$15,000 for training tree trimmers, arborists, and the landscaping industry on the current best management practices about coconut rhinoceros beetles;
- (2) \$160,000 for subsidizing canopy treatments for residential palm owners;
- (3) \$250,000 to perform canine inspections for coconut rhinoceros beetles for high-risk cargo moving between islands;
- (4) \$200,000 for an unspecified number of full-time equivalent permanent positions for biocontrol research within the University of Hawaii; and
- (5) Amounts to be requested by the University of Hawaii for:
 - (A) Extending deployment of coconut rhinoceros beetle response teams to Hawaii island and the islands of Maui, Molokai, and Lanai when coconut rhinoceros beetles are detected; and
 - (B) Subsidizing container fumigation of high-risk materials traveling between islands.

As affirmed by the records of votes of the members of your Committees on Higher Education and Agriculture and Environment that are attached to this report, your Committees are in accord with the intent and purpose of S.B. No. 686, as amended herein, and recommend that it pass Second Reading in the form attached hereto as S.B. No. 686, S.D. 1, and be referred to your Committee on Ways and Means.



Respectfully submitted on
behalf of the members of the
Committees on Higher Education
and Agriculture and
Environment,



MIKE GABBARD, Chair



DONNA MERCADO KIM, Chair



