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GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

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

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LAND
STATE PARKS

Testimony of
RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE
Acting Chairperson

Before the Senate Committees on
WATER, LAND, CULTURE AND THE ARTS,
AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT,
and
PUBLIC SAFETY AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

Friday, March 20, 2026
2:15 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 224

In consideration of
HOUSE BILL 175, HOUSE DRAFT 1
RELATING TO PROPERTY MAINTENANCE

House Bill 175, House Draft 1 requires owners or lessees of real property to maintain their land and establish penalties for failure to do so; allows for exceptions; requires the Department of Agriculture (HDOA) to establish rules for the enforcement and collection of fines for violations relating to the proliferation of invasive species; and requires the Office of the State Fire Marshal to adopt rules for the enforcement and collection of fines for violations relating to the prevention of wildfires and other public safety hazards. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports this measure.**

The Department recognizes that unmanaged vegetation contributes significantly to wildfire spread and intensity, threatens public safety, degrades natural ecosystems, and facilitates the spread of invasive species across landscapes. Analysis from 2020 suggests that 94.4% of Hawai'i's homes are vulnerable to wildfires because their communities are within or adjacent to invasive and flammable grasses. The Department supports this effort to reduce the proliferation of invasive and flammable grass and establishing clear responsibilities for private landowners is an important step toward addressing these interconnected risks.

The Department supports property owners maintaining their properties to mitigate for all prohibited invasive species as best they can. This includes listed invasive species such as Little Fire Ants, Coqui Frogs, and Coconut Rhinoceros Beetles in locations where they are not widespread. Should the property owners or lessees be unable to mitigate these threats

themselves, they must contact and allow for an appropriate government agency or their agent to enter onto the property and assist in controlling the invasive threat.

Addressing property neglect is essential to protecting Hawai'i's ecosystems, mitigating wildfire risks, and maintaining residents' quality of life. The Department supports this effort to require owners to maintain their property by imposing penalties.

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



MAUI

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

VOICE OF BUSINESS

HEARING BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WATER, LAND, CULTURE &
THE ARTS, COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & ENVIRONMENT, AND
COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY & MILITARY AFFAIRS
HAWAII STATE CAPITOL, SENATE CONFERENCE ROOM 224
FRIDAY, MARCH 20, 2026 AT 2:15 P.M.

To The Honorable Senator Chris Lee, Chair
The Honorable Senator Lorraine R. Inouye, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee on Water, Land, Culture & the Arts

To The Honorable Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair
The Honorable Senator Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, III, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee on Agriculture & Environment

To The Honorable Senator Carol Fukunaga, Chair
The Honorable Senator Chris Lee, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee on Public Safety & Military Affairs

COMMENTS ON HB175 RELATING TO PROPERTY MAINTENANCE

The Maui Chamber of Commerce would like to offer **COMMENTS on HB175** which requires owners, lessees, or managers of real property to maintain their property and establish penalties for failure to do so.

The Chamber is concerned about the potential impact on businesses and residents given the proposed penalties for violations in the new section of HRS. Many residents and businesses may not be fully aware of the intricacies of fire protection or invasive species laws. Therefore, we recommend strengthening the bill by adding language that would allow owners, occupants, or other responsible parties a reasonable period (at the county's discretion) to address the issue. There may be circumstances that prevent immediate compliance. For example, following the August 8, 2023 wildfires, many property owners invested significant resources to create firebreaks and clear their land, but had to wait for equipment and/or hired companies to perform the necessary work. We are concerned that, based on the current language of the bill, businesses and residents in such situations may face penalties of up to \$10,000 per violation while they are actively working to remediate the issue. While we fully support the increase in fines and daily assessments for those who refuse to comply, we believe additional flexibility is necessary for those making a good-faith effort to comply.

We also strongly support the inclusion of educational initiatives to ensure both public and private property owners are informed and able to maintain their properties in a safe manner, as outlined in the proposed language.

We thank you for the opportunity to provide **COMMENTS on HB175**.

Sincerely,

Pamela Tumpap
President

To advance and promote a healthy economic environment for business, advocating for a responsive government and quality education, while preserving Maui's unique community characteristics.



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March 20, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WATER, LAND, CULTURE AND THE ARTS
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT
SENATE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

TESTIMONY ON HB 175, HD1
RELATING TO PROPERTY MAINTENANCE

Conference Room 224 & Videoconference
2:15 PM

Aloha Chairs Lee, Gabbard, and Fukunaga, Vice-Chairs Inouye and Richards, and Members of the Committees:

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 opposes HB 175, HD1, which seeks to reduce wildfire risks, address invasive species, and improve overall property maintenance across the State. These are important issues that directly impact agriculture, rural communities, and public safety.

HB 175, HD1 applies broadly to all real property owners and lessees, without adequately accounting for the realities of agricultural operations. Farming and ranching activities inherently involve large tracts of land, varying vegetation cycles, and environmental conditions that are not always fully controllable. The bill's requirements and penalties may unintentionally place an unreasonable burden on agricultural producers who are actively managing their lands.

The bill lacks clear definitions, particularly regarding "invasive species." As noted in prior testimony, many species commonly used in agriculture, such as pasture grasses or certain food crops, may be classified as invasive under various lists. Without clear parameters, farmers and ranchers could face penalties for maintaining crops or forage that are essential to their operations.

The compliance timeline in HB 175, HD1, is not practical for agricultural lands. The requirement to correct violations within a limited timeframe does not reflect the reality that

invasive species management and vegetation control often require ongoing, long-term efforts rather than short-term fixes.

Additionally, HB 175, HD1 raises concerns regarding implementation and enforcement. It is unclear how inspections will be conducted across private agricultural lands, how agencies will coordinate their responsibilities, and whether sufficient resources exist to implement these requirements effectively.

While the bill includes exceptions for properties under agricultural management plans, the process for obtaining such recognition is unclear and may not adequately protect all legitimate agricultural operations.

HFB respectfully recommends the following amendments:

- Clarify and narrowly define “invasive species” to avoid unintended impacts on agricultural crops and pasture.
- Provide explicit exemptions or safe harbor protections for actively managed agricultural lands.
- Extend or allow flexibility in compliance timelines to reflect real-world land management practices.
- Ensure that enforcement mechanisms are clearly defined, reasonable, and respect private property rights.
- Prioritize education, technical assistance, and voluntary compliance before imposing penalties.

Hawai‘i’s farmers and ranchers are committed to responsible land stewardship, including managing invasive species and reducing wildfire risks. However, policies must be practical, clearly defined, and workable on the ground.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.



Hawaii Cattlemen's Council, Inc.

LATE

COMMITTEE ON WATER, LAND, CULTURE AND THE ARTS
Senator Chris Lee, Chair
Senator Lorraine R. Inouye, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT
Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair
Senator Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, III, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY AND MILITARY AFFAIRS
Senator Carol Fukunaga, Chair
Senator Chris Lee, Vice Chair

HB175 HD1

RELATING TO PROPERTY MAINTENANCE

March 5, 2026, 2:00 PM
Conference Room 325 & Videoconference

Chairs Lee, Gabbard, and Fukunaga, Vice Chairs Inouye, Richards, and Lee, and Members of the Committees,

The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council **opposes HB175 HD1** which requires owners or lessees of real property to maintain their property and establish penalties for failure to do so.

We understand that efforts need to be made to reduce wildfire risk statewide for the health of our land, and the safety of our community. We support collaboratively working together to reduce fire fuel loads in a variety of ways, including managed grazing. However, we have concerns that this bill will place undue burden on ranchers who steward land and also contend with invasive species encroaching from neighboring properties. Ranchers aim to reduce fire fuel loads and maintain forage for their livestock, which is a key part of managing land and animals. This system can be an important partner in reducing wildfires. While there are exceptions provided in this bill, the language is broad. Wet summers followed by dry falls and winters could cause a flush of grass, potentially putting a ranch out of compliance. Conversely, an extended drought period of Two-lined Spittlebug outbreak can lead to a higher than normal invasive weed presence in the field, which could also result in a fine. Setting parameters for the exceptions could be difficult to define.

We appreciate the opportunity to testify on this measure. The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council (HCC) is the Statewide umbrella organization comprised of the four county-level Cattlemen's Associations. Ranchers produce a high-quality protein and are the stewards of



almost 750 thousand acres of land in Hawaii, or nearly 20% of the State's total land mass.
We represent the interests of Hawaii's cattle producers.

Nicole Galase
Hawaii Cattlemen's Council
Managing Director

HB-175-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 6:36:04 PM

Testimony for WLA on 3/20/2026 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Julia Estigoy-Kahoonei	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill. Though land "ownership" is not a Hawaiian concept and was more of a forced issue that came out of America stealing Hawaiian lands, what is Hawaiian is the idea and practice of kuleana that comes with the 'aina. So yes, porperty owners or lessses should do their part in maintaining the property or be prepared for a fine. Many of vacant lots here in my community are owned by folks who don't even live here so they have no idea the threat cause by overgrowth or trees too close to a neighbor's home. We all must be responsible stewards of this land