



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Higher Education
Wednesday, February 4, 2026 at 2:00 p.m.

By

Parwinder Grewal, Ph.D.

Dean

College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience
and

Vassilis Syrmos, Ph.D.

Interim Provost

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

HB 1951 – RELATING TO BIOSECURITY

Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on HB 1951. This measure requires the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience (CTAHR) to establish a Center on Biosecurity Research, Education, and Extension (CoBREE) to develop and implement innovative solutions for detecting, monitoring, eradicating, and managing invasive species, and appropriates funds.

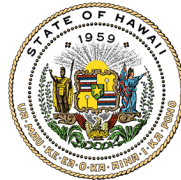
Biosecurity programs require a significant amount of resources and investment to protect agriculture and nature resources. CTAHR respectfully offers an amendment to SECTION 3 in four parts for your consideration as follows: (1) \$1,500,000 for planning and design; (2) \$24,000,000 for construction of the biocontainment labs and greenhouses; (3) \$17,500,000 for construction of a standard office and laboratory building, and an outdoor canine (detector dog) facility; and (4) \$2,000,000 for 12 positions as described in subsection 3 of HB 1951.

The planning and design line item in the proposed subsection 1 will enhance the feasibility study developed by CTAHR in collaboration with the University of Hawai'i System and Merrick and Company Inc. that established preliminary requirements, programmatic needs, scope and costs. Additionally, a \$1,300,000 US Department of Defense subaward for a biocontrol containment trailer will serve as a temporary solution until permanent facilities are constructed. Positions described in Section 3 could be housed at CTAHR at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa as construction of CoBREE is completed. CTAHR will collaborate with other UH Colleges and external agencies in implementing the biosecurity initiatives. The appropriations in HB 1951 will support statewide community assets.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

SYLVIA LUKE
Lt. Governor



State of Hawai'i
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & BIOSECURITY
KA 'OIHANA MAHI'AI A KIA'I MEAOLA
1428 South King Street
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96814-2512
Phone: (808) 973-9560 FAX: (808) 973-9613

SHARON HURD
Chairperson
Board of Agriculture & Biosecurity

DEAN M. MATSUKAWA
Deputy to the Chairperson

**TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE AND BIOSECURITY**

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2026
2:00 PM
CONFERENCE ROOM 309 & VIDEOCONFERENCE**

**HOUSE BILL NO. 1951
RELATING TO BIOSECURITY**

Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill No. 1951 relating to Biosecurity. This measure requires the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience to establish a Center for Biosecurity Research, Education, and Extension to develop and implement innovative solutions for detecting, monitoring, eradicating, and managing invasive species; and appropriates funds. The Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (Department) supports the intent of this measure and offers comments.

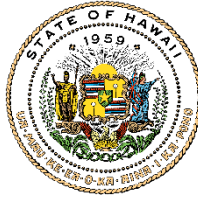
The Department supports the intent of increasing biosecurity capacity throughout the State, including at the University of Hawaii because no single agency is capable of undertaking all biosecurity efforts. The Department suggests that all references to "invasive species" in the measure be changed to "pests and invasive species". As both terms have similar, but different definitions, this measure should not preclude the University from acting upon a pest or be limited only to an invasive species that may not necessarily be considered a pest.

Pursuant to HRS 141-3.5(b)(1), the Department is tasked with leading and coordinating the State's invasive pest control and eradication biosecurity efforts, and believes the resources provided to the University in this measure should be used to augment the Department's existing efforts, not replace or substitute them. The Department also believes that items (1), (2), and (5) should be amended to be effectuated in collaboration with the Department, particularly as the Department is the agency doing regulatory implementation and to ensure there is no duplication as it relates to biocontrol research activities.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



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

P.O. BOX 621
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

DAWN N.S. CHANG
CHAIRPERSON
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT

RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE
FIRST DEPUTY

CIARA W.K. KAHANE
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

AQUATIC RESOURCES
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES
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LAND
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Testimony of
RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE
Acting Chairperson

Before the House Committee on
HIGHER EDUCATION

Wednesday, February 4, 2026
2:00 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 309

In consideration of
HOUSE BILL 1951
RELATING TO BIOSECURITY

House Bill 1951 mandates the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience to establish a Center for Biosecurity Research, Education, and Extension to develop and implement innovative solutions for detecting, monitoring, eradicating, and managing invasive species and allocates funds for this purpose. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports this measure, provided that its passage does not replace or negatively affect priorities outlined in the Executive Supplemental Budget request.**

Hawai'i faces biosecurity threats from various species, including the Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle (CRB), Coqui frog, *Miconia*, Little Fire ants, mosquitoes, parrots, feral ungulates, and small mammalian predators. Establishing and supporting a Center for Biosecurity at the University of Hawai'i (UH) would significantly enhance the State's ability to respond to invasive species and improve mitigation efforts.

The Department, including the Division of Forestry and Wildlife, the Aquatic Invasive Species team for the Division of Aquatic Resources, and the Hawai'i Invasive Species Council, as well as invasive species partners, such as the county Invasive Species Committees, Hawai'i Ant Lab, and CRB Response, all have staff dedicating significant time and resources in the field to control, remove, and eradicate these biosecurity threats. Research support is needed to develop better techniques and tools, such as biological control agents and improved methods

to treat insects, disease pathogens (e.g., the fungi that cause Rapid 'Ōhi'a Death), and invasive plants to meet the challenges ahead.

Although establishing this Center for Biosecurity at UH requires an initial investment, the potential return on that investment is many times greater. Billions of dollars could be saved by preventing future impacts across Hawai'i's 'āina, including not only our natural resources but also families, schools, homes, and businesses. These savings would come from research-driven innovations and better tools to help control invasive species already established in Hawai'i and to prevent the emergence of future biosecurity threats, such as high-risk species and pathogens, including Red Imported Fire ants, biting sand flies, and as-yet unestablished termite species, rodents, and mosquito-borne diseases.

Mahalo for the opportunity to comment on this measure.



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 4, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

TESTIMONY ON HB 1951
RELATING TO BIOSECURITY

Conference Room 309 & Videoconference
2:00 PM

Aloha Chair Garrett, Vice-Chair Amato, 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 HB 1951, which requires the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience (CTAHR) to establish a Center for Biosecurity Research, Education, and Extension (CoBREE) to develop and implement innovative solutions for detecting, monitoring, eradicating, and managing invasive species.

Biosecurity is one of the most critical issues facing Hawai'i's agricultural industry, natural environment, and food systems. Invasive species, pests, and diseases continue to threaten local production, increase costs for farmers and ranchers, and undermine long-term agricultural viability across the State.

HB 1951 establishes a Center for Biosecurity Research, Education, and Extension within the CTAHR. We support this coordinated, science-based approach that integrates research, diagnostics, and extension with education and hands-on training. Farmers and ranchers rely heavily on CTAHR's research and extension services for early detection, management strategies, and practical solutions that can be applied in the field.

We also appreciate that the CoBREE emphasizes collaboration with the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity and other partners, ensuring that research efforts translate into real-world application. Investments in biocontainment facilities, diagnostic capacity, and extension staffing strengthen Hawai'i's ability to respond quickly to emerging threats and reduce long-term economic damage.

Biosecurity challenges are not isolated events; they are ongoing and evolving. Establishing a permanent center focused on detection, management, and education is an essential investment in protecting agriculture, safeguarding natural resources, and supporting Hawai'i's agricultural goals.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



Hawaii Cattlemen's Council, Inc.

COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Rep. Andrew Takuya Garrett, Chair

Rep. Terez Amato, Vice Chair

HB1951

RELATING TO BIOSECURITY

Wednesday, February 4, 2026, 2:00 PM
Conference Room 309 & Videoconference

Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and Members of the Committee,

The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council **supports HB1951** which requires the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience to establish a Center for Biosecurity Research, Education, and Extension to develop and implement innovative solutions for detecting, monitoring, eradicating, and managing invasive species.

CTAHR has been a key resource for understanding invasive species that affect agriculture. Most notably, CTAHR has been a crucial partner in addressing the invasive Twolined Spittlebug, which is decimating high-quality forage and negatively impacting the cattle industry. Due to the research efforts of CTAHR extension agents, our producers have a better understanding of the life cycle of the invasive pest, which allows for better decision making on when efforts are most effective for reducing the population. When a new location of Twolined Spittlebug is discovered, the Hawaii Cattlemen's Council connects the landowner with extension agents and their team at CTAHR, which then sends a team to confirm the presence of the pest and offers best management practices and suggestions for mitigation. Establishing a Center for Biosecurity Research, Education, and Extension will focus more efforts on early detection and managing the invasive species, especially when it pertains to agricultural production.

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



**Testimony of The Nature Conservancy
Supporting HB1951, Relating to Biosecurity
Committee on Higher Education
February 4, 2026 at 2:00 pm
Conference Room 309 and via Videoconference**

Dear Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and Members of the Committee:

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify today. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) Hawai'i and Palmyra supports HB1951, which requires the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience to establish a Center for Biosecurity Research, Education, and Extension to develop and implement innovative solutions for detecting, monitoring, eradicating, and managing invasive species.

Island ecosystems like Hawai'i's evolved in isolation, without many of the aggressive pests and predators found elsewhere in the world. As a result, invasive species can spread quickly and threaten not only the state's unique biodiversity but also key economic sectors, including agriculture and tourism. Strengthening our capacity to prevent, detect, and manage invasive species is essential to safeguarding Hawai'i's natural resources and the communities and industries that depend on it.

Creating a dedicated Center for Biosecurity Research, Education, and Extension will help build the skilled workforce Hawai'i needs to meet rapidly escalating biosecurity challenges. By establishing new positions and professional pathways, including a biosecurity certificate and a one-year master's program, the Center will expand access to training and career development opportunities that conservation organizations have long identified as essential for supporting local workers. In addition to growing workforce capacity, this bill strengthens Hawai'i's overall biosecurity response by investing in predictive modeling, early detection tools, rapid-response capabilities, biocontrol development, and community-based management strategies.

By passing HB1951, the Legislature will help ensure that Hawai'i has the people, tools, and scientific capacity required to respond quickly and effectively to biosecurity threats. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of HB1951.

Guided by science, TNC is a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of the lands and waters upon which all life depends. The Conservancy has helped protect more than 200,000 acres of natural lands in Hawai'i and Palmyra Atoll. We manage 84,000 acres in 13 nature preserves and 18 managed areas and have supported over 50 coastal communities to help protect and restore the nearshore reefs and fisheries of the main Hawaiian Islands.

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**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
THE THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION OF 2026**

**COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION
Rep. Andrew Takuya Garrett, Chair
Rep. Terez Amato, Vice Chair**

**Wednesday, February 4, 2026
2:00 PM
Conference Room 309 & Videoconference
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street**

RE: HB1951 RELATING TO BIOSECURITY

My name is Eric S. Tanouye and I am the President for the Hawaii Floriculture and Nursery Association. HFNA is a statewide umbrella organization with approximately 350 members. Our membership is made up with breeders, hybridizers, propagators, growers, shippers, wholesalers, retailers, educators, and the allied industry, which supports our efforts in agriculture.

The Hawaii Floriculture and Nursery Association (HFNA) **SUPPORTS Bill 1951** which requires the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience to establish a Center for Biosecurity Research, Education, and Extension to develop and implement innovative solutions for detecting, monitoring, eradicating, and managing invasive species.

We appreciate these efforts to help strengthen and enforce our Biosecurity program. Research and Education is the most promising vector to get a control on our Biosecurity. There are no easy solutions, but we can find the solutions to help stem invasive pests and diseases. It is important that we plan for the future to make our goals tenable.

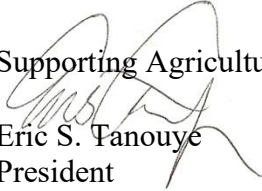
It is our understanding that this center for Biosecurity will be making available facilities for bio-containment for bio-controls. At the level 2 will prioritize support of production agriculture and our nurserymen and women.

These positions that this bill will help fund are vital and will enhance CTAHR's competence as we go into the future of Bio-Security. This will also help to facilitate the college working with state and federal agencies.

We ask that you support our industry and agriculture, so that we may continue to bring the beauty of Hawaii to others through flowers and ornamentals.



If you have any questions at this time, I would be happy to discuss them and can be reached by phone at 808-959-3535 ext 2627, cell 960-1433 and email eric@greenpointnursery.com.


Supporting Agriculture and Hawaii,

Eric S. Tanouye
President

Hawaii Floriculture and Nursery Association



EAST OAHU COUNTY FARM BUREAU
910 CALIFORNIA AVE., WAHIAWA, HI 96786

February 3, 2026

Representative Andrew Takuya Garrett, Chair, and Representative Terez Amato, Vice Chair
House Committee on Higher Education
State Capitol, 415 S. Beretania St.
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and Members of the Committee,

The East O'ahu County Farm Bureau, which represents approximately 420 farmers and supporters of agriculture from Waimanalo to Kahuku, **strongly supports HB 1951**, "Relating to Biosecurity," which would establish a Center for Biosecurity Research, Education, and Extension under CTAHR.

Invasive pests and diseases significantly impact Hawai'i's farms and ranches. The proposed center should help provide innovative solutions to combat these pests and to prevent new pests and pathogens from entering our State. It should also prepare students for careers in the field of biosecurity, and train current and future farmers in biosecurity techniques.

CTAHR's continuing research, education, and extension activities are essential to Hawai'i's agricultural production. We hope you will support Hawai'i's agricultural community by passing HB 1951.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter of great importance to Hawai'i's farmers and ranchers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Frederick M. Mencher".

Frederick M. Mencher
for Grant Hamachi, President
East O'ahu County Farm Bureau



HAWAII CROP IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

HB1951 – In Support
Relating to Biosecurity

LATE

House Committee on Higher Education

Date: Wednesday, February 4, 2026
Time: 2 PM
Place: Conference Room 309

Aloha Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii Crop Improvement Association (HCIA) appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony **in support of HB1951**, which requires the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience to establish a Center for Biosecurity Research, Education, and Extension to develop and implement innovative solutions for detecting, monitoring, eradicating, and managing invasive species.

Hawaii is uniquely vulnerable to invasive species due to our geographic isolation, reliance on imports, and biodiversity. Once invasive species establish themselves here, eradication is costly and difficult. This measure takes a proactive, science-based approach by investing in long-term biosecurity capacity. Establishing a dedicated center will strengthen Hawaii's ability to predict, detect, and respond rapidly to invasive species before they spread and cause irreversible damage.

HB1951 also reinforces collaboration among government agencies, communities, and private-sector partners, ensuring that research translates into real-world solutions that benefit the entire state.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support.

The Hawaii Crop Improvement Association is a Hawaii-based non-profit organization that promotes modern agriculture to help farmers and communities succeed. Through education, collaboration, and advocacy, we work to ensure a safe and sustainable food supply, support responsible farming practices, and build a healthy economy.

HB-1951

Submitted on: 1/30/2026 2:03:21 PM

Testimony for HED on 2/4/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Megan Blazak	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Honorable Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and Members of the Committee,

As a constituent of House District 2 in Hilo, I strongly support HB1951. The College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience (CTAHR) has a long and proven track record of effectively addressing the agricultural and biosecurity concerns of the State. The agricultural sector and public at large will benefit greatly from the establishment of the proposed CTAHR Center for Biosecurity Research, Education, and Extension. Thank you.

HB-1951

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 11:42:02 AM

Testimony for HED on 2/4/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ashlyn Carlino	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

HB1951: Relating to BioSecurity

Dear Members of the Committee,

I am Ashlyn Carlino, a Bachelors of Social Work student, here at the University of Hawai'i Mānoa, and I am in support of HB1951. Invasive species have always proved to be detrimental to numerous environments around the globe, and we can see very clearly here in Hawai'i what the consequences can be when certain species are out of control. Certain invasive species can result in habitat destruction, biodiversity loss, and forest degradation. These species include, but are not limited to, the coconut rhinoceros beetle (*Oryctes rhinoceros*, or "CRB"), an insect which eats banana and pineapple crops, and causes serious damage to the palm trees that enhance the beauty of the Hawaiian Islands. Feral pigs, goats, and deer heavily overgraze forests, resulting in habitat loss for many native birds and other animals. These issues can produce a burden on the economy and culture of Hawai'i. An introduction of two, non-native, microscopic fungi, were identified as the cause for Rapid Ōhi'a Death (ROD), affecting 135,000 acres of native forests across Hawaii, Maui, Kauai, Maui, and O'ahu. This disease has killed over 1 million 'Ōhi'a trees, usually ending the trees existence in just under a couple weeks. For these reasons, I believe it is unbelievably important to provide the University of Hawaii at Mānoa the proper funds to establish a center on biodiversity research in order to keep these islands alive and thriving.

Sincerely,

Ashlyn Carlino

HB-1951

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 3:06:18 PM

Testimony for HED on 2/4/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Keoni DeFranco	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Keoni DeFranco, and I submit this testimony in strong support of HB1951.

Invasive species continue to threaten Hawai‘i’s agriculture, food security, natural ecosystems, and rural livelihoods. From pests devastating crops to invasive animals damaging watersheds and farmlands, the impacts are growing and costly across our islands.

HB1951 provides a proactive and comprehensive solution by establishing a Center for Biosecurity Research, Education, and Extension at the University of Hawai‘i. By investing in early detection, predictive modeling, community-based management, and workforce training, this bill will strengthen Hawai‘i’s ability to prevent and respond to invasive species before they cause irreversible harm.

This investment will protect local agriculture, support farmers and ranchers, preserve native ecosystems, and build long-term capacity in biosecurity science and education.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of HB1951.

Respectfully,
Keoni DeFranco

HB-1951

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 10:55:45 AM

Testimony for HED on 2/4/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Randy Cabral	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strong support

HB-1951

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 10:56:54 AM

Testimony for HED on 2/4/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
John R. Gordines	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

CTAHR is a valuable partner and resource of Hawaii agriculture. This will supplement the goal of controlling and eradicating invasives.

HB-1951

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 12:11:36 PM

Testimony for HED on 2/4/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jill Coombs	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members,

I write in strong support of enhancing invasive species control on the island of Kaua‘i from the perspective of a neighboring island community on Moloka‘i. What happens on one island does not stay on one island. Pests, plant diseases, and invasive species move between islands through interisland travel, shipping, and shared agricultural systems, and the impacts are felt statewide.

Moloka‘i’s farmers, ranchers, and natural resources are especially vulnerable to invasive species due to our island’s size and ecological sensitivity. Strong prevention, monitoring, and response efforts on Kaua‘i help protect not only its own ecosystems and agricultural producers, but also those of neighboring islands like Moloka‘i. When invasive species are detected and managed early on one island, the risk of spread across the state is significantly reduced.

Investing in invasive species control on Kaua‘i strengthens Hawai‘i’s collective biosecurity, protects local food production, and preserves native ecosystems that are culturally and environmentally important to all of us. As neighbors who share the same waters, winds, and supply chains, we all benefit from coordinated and well-resourced invasive species efforts. I urge your support of this measure.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Jill Coombs

HB-1951

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 7:41:34 PM

Testimony for HED on 2/4/2026 2:00:00 PM

LATE

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jimmy Gomes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I stand in support of this bill and support Hawaii Farm Bureau testimony.