THE SENATE
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2025
STATE OF HAWAII

S.B. NO. 548

JAN 17 2025

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO THE HAWAII INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL.

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

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the Hawai‘i invasive species council was created in response to the need for statewide coordination and direction in addressing invasive species in 2003. Hawaii was one of the first states to create an invasive species council through state law. The council's work is critical to support on-the-ground response efforts to address some of the State's worst pests, such as the little fire ant, coqui frog, and fungi that cause rapid ‘ōhi‘a death, and to prevent the introduction of new pests, such as the africanized bee and red imported fire ant, through its ability to coordinate with and across multiple agencies and organizations.

The legislature further finds that effective biosecurity at all levels requires a collective effort among state, federal, and other partner organizations. The Hawai‘i invasive species council's allocation of funding every year is essential to supporting partner organizations whose sole mission is to control existing target pests in Hawai‘i, the development of

innovative tools and technologies, and continued campaigns to increase community awareness and engagement. Organizations and work funded through the Hawai‘i invasive species council are a part of Hawaii's overall biosecurity program.

The legislature further finds that the Hawai‘i invasive species council receives an annual net funding allocation of approximately $5,750,000, of which approximately ninety per cent is redirected towards its competitive grant program. The remaining modest amount of funding is for the Hawai‘i invasive species council's operating expenses, overhead, and budget and finance restriction. This funding allocation has not increased in four years and covers less than fifty per cent of the total amount of competitive grant proposals received. The need for more funding is exacerbated by inflation, the high cost of doing business in the State, and the need to attract and retain qualified staff with competitive cost-of-living adjustments. As a result, state funds are largely used only as bridge funding to simply keep these strategic programs viable. Partner agencies are largely limited to focusing on "invasive species containment" rather than their "eradication".

The purpose of this Act is to appropriate funds for the native resources and fire protection program and Hawai'i invasive species council to continue to control and eradicate invasive species in the State.

SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of $4,250,000 or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 for the native resources and fire protection program and Hawai'i invasive species council to address the invasive species crisis.

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

SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

INTRODUCED BY: _____

S.B. NO. 548

Report Title:
HISC; Native Resources and Fire Protection Program; Viability Funding; Invasive Species; Appropriation

Description:
Appropriates funds for the Native Resources and Fire Protection Program and Hawai'i Invasive Species Council to ensure their long-term viability and continue to control and eradicate invasive species in the State.

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