

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
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KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

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

Before the House Committee on
WATER AND LAND

Friday, February 19, 2026
9:00 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 411

In consideration of
HOUSE BILL 1601 HOUSE DRAFT 1
RELATING TO BIOSECURITY

House Bill 1601 House Draft 1 amends Act 236 of the 2025 Session Laws of Hawaii by updating section 42 to change the overseeing agency for Hawaii Invasive Species Council (HISC) funds from the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to the Department of Land and Natural Resources. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources supports this measure, provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities outlined in the Executive Supplemental Budget request.**

The HISC is currently managed by the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) in accordance with Hawaii Revised Statutes Chapter 194. It will stay under DLNR until 2030, when it will transfer to the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (DAB), as outlined by Act 236. When Act 236 was enacted, FY 2026 HISC funding was allocated to DLNR, and for FY 2027, it was allocated to DAB. However, in FY 2027, HISC will still be managed by DLNR, and it would be more streamlined and efficient if HISC funding were allocated to the agency responsible for managing it.

DLNR supports this amendment to Act 236, which shifts the appropriation of Act 236 HISC funds for FY 2027 from DAB to DLNR. If there are future HISC appropriations, DLNR recommends allocating the funding to the agency that manages HISC.

Mahalo for the opportunity to comment on this measure.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

SYLVIA LUKE
Lt. Governor



SHARON HURD
Chairperson
Board of Agriculture & Biosecurity

DEAN M. MATSUKAWA
Deputy to the Chairperson

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

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

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WATER & LAND

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2026
9:00 AM
CONFERENCE ROOM 325 & VIDEOCONFERENCE**

**HOUSE BILL NO. 1601, HD1
RELATING TO BIOSECURITY**

Chair Hashem, Vice Chair Morikawa, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill No. 1601, HD1 relating to biosecurity. This measure amends the expending agency for a fiscal year 2026-2027 appropriation for the Hawaii Invasive Species Council (HISC) from the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (Department) to the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR). The Department supports this bill.

As HISC remains administratively housed within DLNR until 2030, changing the expending agency from the Department to DLNR maintains the existing administrative clarity on HISC's expenditures. As with the current appropriation to DLNR that was authorized under Act 236, Session Laws of Hawaii 2025, the Department wants to emphasize the importance of these funds to increase biosecurity capacity, particularly when utilized for research into the detection, control, and/or management of high priority pests and invasive species; and to also meet the statutory requirements in HRS 141-3.5 for reporting of information to the Department's pest dashboard.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

2/19/2026

**The Honorable Mark Hashem, Chair
The Honorable Dee Morikawa, Vice Chair
House Committee on Water & Land
Hawai'i State Legislature**

RE: HB 1601

On behalf of American Bird Conservancy and our members throughout Hawai'i, I am writing to express our **support for HB 1601**.

This bill appropriately changes the receiving agency of appropriated funds for the Hawai'i Invasive Species Council (HISC) to the Department of Land and Natural Resources, a move that is consistent with the administration of HISC.

Invasive species are among the leading causes of biodiversity decline worldwide and are a major threat to Hawai'i's native wildlife. In recognition of the significant role that HISC plays in the protection of Hawai'i's natural resources, as well as the economic and cultural importance of these resources, the legislature may also wish to consider increased funding for HISC initiatives.

Mahalo for your consideration,



Grant Sizemore, M.S., CWB®
Director of Invasive Species Programs

Contact

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**8255 E. Main Street, Suites D & E,
Marshall, VA 20115**



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WATER & LAND

February 19, 2026

9:00 AM

Conference Room 411

In SUPPORT of HB1601 HD1: RELATING TO BIOSECURITY

Aloha Chair Hashem, Vice Chair Morikawa, and Members of the House Water & Land Committee,

On behalf of our over 20,000 members and supporters, the Sierra Club of Hawai'i **SUPPORTS HB1601 HD1**, which will ensure that the Hawai'i Invasive Species Council (HISC) can continue their vital and foundational role in our biosecurity strategy, without undue delay or disruption.

HISC and its programs and partners have proven to be incredibly effective at holding the line against invasive species in our islands, despite historically limited funding and a lack of support from other agencies assigned their own unique biosecurity roles (such as the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (DAB)). For example, the HISC and the island invasive species committees (ISCs) that it supports are able to combine specialized expertise, field knowledge, cross-agency coordination, and community relationships to support the all-hands-on-deck fight to monitor, manage, and eradicate myriad invasive species throughout Hawai'i, in areas ranging from forests to open spaces to even businesses and homes. **Notably, these entities have been able to successfully prevent or eradicate dozens of outbreaks of invasive species on every island, from fireweed to pampas grass to little fire ants, saving us from untold millions of dollars in damages while protecting our environment, food security, cultural integrity, local businesses, and residents from the significant and potentially irreparable impacts of invasive pests.**

While HISC received \$4.5M for FY26-27 in last year's Act 236, the same Act placed the responsibility of administering these funds with DAB, instead of with the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR). This change in administration of funds may have been an oversight, as HISC remains administratively attached to the DLNR. In any case, the transfer of funds to DAB threatens to disrupt critical biosecurity efforts carried out by HISC and its partners throughout the islands, potentially indefinitely, as DAB struggles to administer this HISC funding on top of the myriad other, well-documented challenges it is facing.

This measure would accordingly return HISC funds back to the DLNR where they are normally housed, and where they have been successfully administered for years. Notably, unlike DAB, DLNR has the experience and expertise to understand HISC's activities and our biosecurity needs, and has staff specifically assigned to manage and distribute HISC funding.



As we have painfully learned time and again, undue delays in biosecurity response efforts exponentially increase the costs of detecting and managing or eradicating invasive species, and can lead to irreversible harms to our islands and our ways of life. The disruptions to biosecurity programs that would be left in limbo if this common-sense measure is NOT passed may therefore result in consequences that we simply cannot afford.

Accordingly, the Sierra Club of Hawai'i respectfully urges the Committee to **PASS** HB1601 HD1. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify.

BIISC
23 E. Kawili St.
Hilo, HI 96720
(808) 933-3340
www.biisc.org



Feb 17, 2026

Hearing: Feb 19th Committee on Water & Land
RE: HB1601- SD1 Relating to Biosecurity

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

We would like to express our support for HB1601, directing the funding allocated to the Hawaii Invasive Species Council to be directed to the Department of Land and Natural Resources, where the HISC has been administratively attached for nearly two decades. Although the HISC responsibilities will be moving to the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity in 2030, during this time while the HISC remains with DLNR, it is reasonable that the funds continue to go to that department.

Each year, the HISC disburses the majority of this legislative allocation through competitive grants to programs and projects that are working on invasive species issues in Hawaii. Currently, there is a very smooth and transparent process for application with clear guidelines and timelines. As the manager of a grant-funded program, I have completed many grant applications over the years and I can say that is not always the case, especially when organizations or agencies are setting up new grants. If DAB is to take over this responsibility, they will need time and resources to build this program, and ensure that there is no delay in ensuring these funds are fairly and reasonably distributed to the projects with the most impact on invasive species in Hawaii. A movement of the funds in this coming fiscal year - without the corresponding infrastructure in place on the DAB side - would create unnecessary barriers to ensuring critical biosecurity work is funded as intended by the legislature.

Additionally, the HISC funds several key state-wide positions we depend on for support in our work. The Hawaii-Pacific Weed Risk Assessment Specialist helps us to quickly identify and evaluate potentially invasive plants, and generates the results of "plant investigations" in reports that are shared with the public via the website PlantPono.org, empowering our community members to make informed decisions about their personal planting decisions. The 643pest.org coordinator responds to every report that is submitted by the public, providing everything from advice on dealing with widespread species to immediate connection with key personnel across multiple agencies for new detections of high risk species. A HISC staff member coordinates the Ports of Entry Monitoring Program (POEM), which provides interagency coordination of surveillance at our ship and air ports for disease-carrying mosquitoes, red imported fire ant, Africanized honeybees, and Japanese beetles, amongst others. The POEM project allowed us to find the first beetle in the current Kona infestation of CRB, at the Kona airport. These key positions would be jeopardized on July 1 if there is no action taken to ensure continuity of funding. This would create significant upheaval in the invasive species community, delaying or stopping important work.

We urge the committee to pass this common-sense measure. Mahalo for your consideration.



Franny Brewer
Program Manager
fbrewer@hawaii.edu



House of Representatives
Committee on Water & Land
Thursday, February 19, 2026
9:00 AM Conference Room 411 & Videoconference
State Capitol

Testimony in Support of HB1601 HD1

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

The Coordinating Group on Alien Pest Species (CGAPS) is **in support of HB1601 HD1, Relating to Biosecurity**. This bill provides the fiscal year 2026-2027 funding for the Hawaii Invasive Species Council (HISC) to the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) rather than the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (DAB).

Part VII of Act 236 (2025) transfers all functions and duties of HISC from DLNR to DAB, effective January 1, 2030. (Part VII & §47(6) Act 236 (2025)) HISC will remain attached to DLNR for administrative purposes until that time. However, section 42 of Act 236 transferred the fiscal year 2026-27 funding for HISC to DAB. HB1601 HD1 proposes to remedy this situation.

HISC has no statutory staff or positions. For years, DLNR has assigned its own civil service staff and has contracted additional project support to successfully carry out HISC duties and functions under chapter 194, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS). HISC's small staff carries out key invasive species prevention and response programs, including 643PEST.org (an online reporting system developed and moderated by HISC), the Hawaii-Pacific Weed Risk Assessment screening and Plant Pono program (programs to promote the use of non-invasive plants by consumers and land managers), and the Port of Entry Monitoring Program (a program that conducts monitoring surveys for high impact invasive species at air and sea port properties). Through its annual competitive grant program, HISC funding has also provided critical support for the island-based Invasive Species Committees and many other control and research projects, supporting work in areas not covered by existing state programs. Sending HISC funds to DAB on July 1, 2026, to carry out the HISC duties in chapter 194, HRS, while HISC authorities are still attached to DLNR, does not seem efficient or practical.

Other titles of Act 236 established new biosecurity authorities, funding, and responsibilities for DAB that the Legislature has prioritized and that should take precedence over managing HISC programs and the disbursement of HISC funds.

We hope you will support HB1601 HD1 to provide HISC's funding to its administrative agency for the fiscal year 2026-27. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and our support for this bill.

Aloha,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "C. Martin".

Christy Martin
CGAPS Program Manager

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "P.S. Easley".

Stephanie Easley
CGAPS Legal Fellow



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February 19, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WATER & LAND

TESTIMONY ON HB 1601, HD1
RELATING TO BIOSECURITY

Conference Room 411 & Videoconference
9:00 AM

Aloha Chair Hashem, Vice-Chair Morikawa, 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 1601, HD1, which clarifies the expending authority for the \$4.25 million appropriated for the Hawai'i Invasive Species Council (HISC) for fiscal year 2026–2027 under Act 236, SLH 2025.

Act 236 appropriated \$4.25 million for HISC and established the transfer of HISC from the Department of Land and Natural Resources to the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity, effective January 1, 2030. Until that transition occurs, HISC remains housed, staffed, and administered within DLNR.

HFB believes it is both practical and fiscally responsible to have the FY 2026–2027 HISC appropriation administered by the department currently responsible for implementing the program. Aligning the expending authority with DLNR during this interim period will help ensure continuity, reduce administrative inefficiencies, and allow HISC to deploy resources quickly and effectively to address invasive species threats.

The Hawai'i Farm Bureau continues to support the long-term integration of invasive species efforts with agricultural biosecurity when HISC transitions to the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity in 2030. In the meantime, we encourage continued coordination between DLNR, DAB, and agricultural stakeholders to ensure that invasive species priorities affecting agriculture remain well represented.

HFB appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony and supports HB 1601, HD1 as a necessary measure to ensure that the \$4.25 million appropriation for HISC is administered efficiently and in alignment with the current organizational structure during this transition period.

**Testimony of The Nature Conservancy
Supporting HB1601 HD1, Relating to Biosecurity
Committee on Water & Land
February 19, 2026 at 9:00 am
Conference Room 411 and via Videoconference**

Dear Chair Hashem, Vice Chair Morikawa, and Members of the Committee:

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify today. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) Hawai'i and Palmyra supports HB1601 HD1, which amends the expending agency for a Fiscal Year 2026-2027 appropriation for the Hawaii Invasive Species Council (HISC) from the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (DAB) to the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR).

As managers of over 80,000 acres of lands hosting some of Hawai'i's most critical ecosystems, we understand the importance of biosecurity to the health of our 'āina. We commend the legislatures commitment to biosecurity marked by the passage of Act 236 in 2025. A critical part of that Act delays the transfer of all rights, powers, functions and duties of HISC from DLNR to DAB until January 1, 2030. Until that date, HISC continues to be administered under DLNR, allowing for the orderly transition of authorities while maintaining the critical biosecurity mission and functions of the council.

However, Act 236 inadvertently bestowed immediate fiscal responsibility of HISC to DAB. This redirection of fiscal responsibility before the transfer of HISC could slow or halt ongoing HISC-funded projects statewide, including rapid response actions and community partnerships. Invasive species threats move quickly, and even brief funding or administrative delays can have drastic ecological consequences.

HB1601 HD1 will properly address this looming threat for Fiscal Year 2026-2027 by amending the expending agency for HISC from DAB to DLNR. This simple fix will help prevent delays that could accelerate the spread of invasive species across Hawai'i's most vulnerable ecosystems.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of HB1601 HD1.

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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Date of Hearing: February 18, 2026

To: Chair Mark J. Hashem, Vice Chair Dee Morikawa, and the House Committee on Water & Land

Subject: **HB1601 HD1**, Relating to Biosecurity

Aloha,

I am writing in **support** of **HB1601 HD1**. This measure amends the expending agency for the fiscal year 2026-2027 appropriation for the Hawaii Invasive Species Council by transferring that responsibility from the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (DAB) to the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR).

Invasive species pose significant threats to Hawai'i's watersheds, native forests, and biodiversity. Many of the most damaging invasive species impacts in Hawai'i include habitat degradation, loss of native biodiversity, increased wildfire risk, and reduced water security which are directly tied to land and natural resource management. As the state agency responsible for managing public lands, natural area reserves, forests, and wildlife, DLNR is well positioned to oversee invasive species funding that can align with these ecological challenges.

By placing expending authority under DLNR, it supports a more ecosystem-based approach to invasive species management. DLNR works closely with conservation partners and community-based land stewards across the state who are directly involved in invasive species prevention and control. This management approach complements biosecurity efforts by helping prevent the spread of invasive species before they reach farms and food production systems. Aligning fiscal oversight with these efforts can lead to improved coordination, efficiency, and strategic use of resources.

For these reasons, **I urge the committee to pass HB1601 HD1** in its commitment to protecting Hawai'i's lands, ecosystems, and communities.

Mahalo,
Brandon Kinard & the Food+ Policy Team
#fixourfoodsystem

The Food+ Policy internship develops student advocates who learn work skills while increasing civic engagement to become emerging leaders. We focus on good food systems policy because we see the importance and potential of the food system in combating climate change and increasing the health, equity, and resiliency of Hawai'i communities.

In 2026, the cohort of interns are undergraduate and graduate students and young professionals working in the food system. They are a mix of traditional and nontraditional students, including parents and veterans, who have backgrounds in education, farming, public health, nutrition, and Hawaiian culture.

HB-1601-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 12:30:35 PM

Testimony for WAL on 2/19/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marcia Kemble	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Greetings Committee Members,

I am writing in strong support of HB1601. Hawaii’s invasive species problem continues to worsen and is already at a crisis level. DLNR and its dedicated staff have the experience and expertise to ensure Hawai’i Invasive Species Committee (HISC) funds get to the programs that we depend on, to protect our homes, farms, lands, and waters from invasive pests. These include the highly effective island invasive species committees, 643PEST.org, the Hawai‘i Weed Risk Assessment, and the Plant Pono Program, among others.

In contrast, the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (DAB) has limited expertise in the breadth of HISC’s work, continues to struggle with implementing the new authorities and staff positions it was given last year, and has a track record of inadequately administering biosecurity funding and ignoring invasive species threats generally. Having DAB administer FY26-27 HISC funds on top of DAB’s current challenges, a change that was enacted last year, would only hinder HISC’s partners and programs with potential funding disruptions and bureaucracy - at a time when Hawai‘i’s biosecurity crises need faster responses, not undue delays.

HB1601 will help ensure that invasive species response funds are deployed in a timely, transparent, and effective manner. I urge you to please PASS this measure.

Mahalo for your attention.

Marcia Kemble

Makiki



House of Representatives
Committee on Water and Land
Thursday, February 19, 2026
9:00 AM Room 411
State Capitol

SUBJECT: Testimony – In Support of HB1601 HD1 “Relating to Biosecurity”

Aloha Chair Hashem, Vice Chair Morikawa, and Members of the Committee:

The O’ahu Invasive Species Committee (OISC) **strongly supports HB1601 HD1, Relating to Biosecurity**. This measure would appropriate \$4,250,000 for fiscal year 2026–2027 for the operations of the Hawai’i Invasive Species Council (HISC) and would return the administration of HISC funds to the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR), where the Council is attached for administrative purposes only.

HISC funding supports critical statewide biosecurity tools and programs, including 643PEST.org, an online pest reporting system developed and moderated by HISC; the Hawai’i–Pacific Weed Risk Assessment and Plant Pono program; and grant funding for organizations addressing priority invasive species issues, including the invasive species committees on each island.

OISC is one of the island-based invasive species committees operating in partnership with HISC. We work in partnership with state, county, federal, academic, and community organizations to prevent, detect, and respond rapidly to invasive species that threaten Hawai’i’s environment, agriculture, economy, and public health. This includes on-going responses to the little fire ant (LFA) and coqui frog infestations, among many other priority pests, across O’ahu.

Any interruption in function or funding to HISC administratively would severely weaken current containment and eradication efforts occurring across the State. We are at a tipping point for several high-priority invasive species, so disrupting response efforts now would lead to irreparable damage to our ecosystems and communities.

Returning fund-administration to DLNR will prevent disruptions to the HISC. DLNR has successfully administered HISC funds for many years, assigning dedicated civil service staff and contracting with the University of Hawai’i to manage and distribute funds through a transparent, competitive proposal and evaluation process. This approach has provided consistent, timely support to on-the-ground invasive species prevention and response efforts statewide.

At the same time, the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (DAB) continues to play a vital and expanding role in Hawai’i’s biosecurity system. DAB has recently been granted new authorities, funding, and responsibilities that the Legislature has prioritized. As the department continues to carry out increased statutory responsibilities, requiring DAB administration of HISC funds under chapter 194 is an unnecessary addition that would interrupt the continuity of HISC operations and statewide biosecurity efforts. DAB does not currently employ a comparable open proposal and evaluation process and has not historically provided grant support to most HISC funding applicants.

Invasive species pose an ongoing and costly threat to Hawai'i. Effective biosecurity depends on early detection, rapid response, and strong statewide coordination. Stable funding and appropriate administration of HISC resources are essential to protecting Hawai'i's natural resources and communities.

For these reasons, the O'ahu Invasive Species Committee respectfully urges your support of HB1601 HD1.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nate M. Dube". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Nate Dube
Manager
O'ahu Invasive Species Committee (OISC)