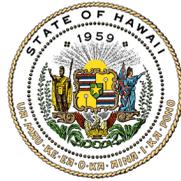


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

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 AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2026
9:30 AM
CONFERENCE ROOM 325 & VIDEOCONFERENCE**

**HOUSE BILL NO. 1951, HD1
RELATING TO BIOSECURITY**

Chair Chun, Vice Kusch, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill No. 1951, HD1, 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

Testimony of Sharon Hurd
February 18, 2026
Page 2

primary agency tasked with conducting regulatory activities and to ensure there is no duplication relating 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. KAHAHANE
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

AQUATIC RESOURCES
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT
CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS
CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES
ENFORCEMENT
ENGINEERING
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

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

Before the House Committee on
AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

Wednesday, February 18, 2026
9:30AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 325

In consideration of
HOUSE BILL 1951 HOUSE DRAFT 1
RELATING TO BIOSECURITY

House Bill 1951, House Draft 1, mandates that the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience 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, invasive corals, various ballast water and hull-fouling organisms, and small mammalian predators. Establishing and supporting a Center for Biosecurity at the University of Hawai'i (UH) would greatly enhance the state's ability to respond to invasive species and strengthen 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 present and future challenges.

Establishing the Center for Biosecurity at UH requires an initial investment, but the return on that investment is much 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.

Federal funding with a 1:1 match is available for a facility like the proposed Center for Biosecurity's biocontrol agent research facility. As a result, State funding for this facility would be doubled if it becomes available.

Mahalo for the opportunity to comment on this measure.



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 Agriculture & Food Systems
Wednesday, February 18, 2026 at 9:30 a.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 HD1 – RELATING TO BIOSECURITY

Chair Chun, Vice Chair Kusch, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on HB 1951 HD1. 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 natural resources. CTAHR appreciates the amendment in HD1 to list SECTION 3 in four parts: (1) for planning and design; (2) for construction of the biocontainment labs and greenhouses; (3) for construction of a standard office and laboratory building, and an outdoor canine (detector dog) facility; and (4) for twelve positions.

The planning and design line item in Section 3, 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. Appropriations for HB 1951 HD1 will support statewide community assets.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.



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

**COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS
Rep. Cory M. Chun, Chair
Rep. Matthias Kusch, Vice Chair**

**Wednesday, February 18, 2026
9:30 AM
Conference Room 332 & Videoconference
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street**

RE: HB1951HD1 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.

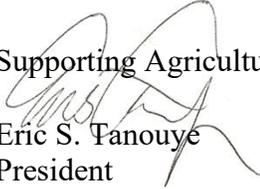
It is our understanding that this center for Biosecurity will be making available facilities for bio-containment for bio-controls. At the level 2 will prioritize support of production agriculture and our nurserymen and women.

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.

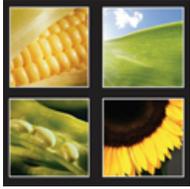


If you have any questions at this time, I would be happy to discuss them and can be reached by phone at 808-959-3535 ext 2627, cell 960-1433 and email eric@greenpointnursery.com.


Supporting Agriculture and Hawaii,

Eric S. Tanouye
President

Hawaii Floriculture and Nursery Association



HAWAII CROP IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

HB1951 HD1 – In Support
Relating to Biosecurity

House Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems

Date: Wednesday, February 18, 2026
Time: 9:30 AM
Place: Conference Room 325

Aloha Chair Chun, Vice Chair Kusch, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii Crop Improvement Association (HCIA) appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony **in support of HB1951, HD1** 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 HD1 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.



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 18, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

TESTIMONY ON HB 1951, HD1
RELATING TO BIOSECURITY

Conference Room 325 & Videoconference
9:30 AM

Aloha Chair Chun, Vice-Chair Kusch, 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, HD1, 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, HD1 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.



February 16th, 2026

To: Chair Garret Andrew Takuya, Vice Chair Amato Terez and the House Committee on Higher Education

Subject: **HB1951**, Relating to Biosecurity.

Aloha,

As a member of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa community and the Food+ Policy team, I am in strong support of House Bill 1951, which establishes a Center for Biosecurity Research, Education, and Extension at the UH College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience. This measure has been amended and improved to reflect committee-level clarifications and to better define the scope of the center's work to implement this goal.

Invasive species pose a serious threat to Hawai'i. The rhinoceros beetle has decimated the coconut palm industry on the island of O'ahu and is spreading to other islands, altering landscapes and threatening food production. Coffee berry borer and coffee leaf rust have reduced coffee production in the state, and the two-lined spittlebug is destroying pastures, which threatens the viability of Hawai'i's livestock industry. Meanwhile, mongooses threaten native bird species. Invasive plant species reduce freshwater production and increase wildfire risk. Invasive species pose both ecological and economic harm to Hawai'i. The State of Hawai'i is in dire need of eradicating the issues caused by invasive species.

The establishment of a biosecurity center at UH Mānoa is an essential step in responding proactively to these threats and helps statewide efforts, including the companion Senate proposal, SB2707, which mirrors the same objectives and adds to the Legislature's unified recognition of this critical issue. This extension will generate innovative solutions for early detection, monitoring, eradication, and management of invasive species. This work saves millions in costs when invasive threats are detected early. This bill will also help endemic species that support our ecosystems in Hawai'i, which brings a ranging number of benefits to the state. I support this bill because it gives UH Mānoa an opportunity to be a part of cutting-edge science and innovation toward a cause that will support farmers, native forests, food security, restoration, and endemic species.

Mahalo,

Carlin McFadden & 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.



COORDINATING GROUP ON
ALIEN PEST SPECIES

House of Representatives
Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems
Wednesday, February 18, 2026
9:30 AM Conference Room 325 & Videoconference
State Capitol

Testimony in Support of HB1951 HD1

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

The Coordinating Group on Alien Pest Species (CGAPS) is **in support of HB1951 HD1**, *Relating to Biosecurity*, which requires the University of Hawaii College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience (CTAHR) to establish a Center for Biosecurity Research, Education, and Extension to develop and implement innovative biosecurity solutions.

CTAHR is well-positioned to establish such a research and development center with respected experts in tropical pests and diseases, the Agrosecurity Lab, the Extension Service, and more. If this committee were open to an amendment, we suggest the following language that could bring in other University of Hawaii system resources:

SECTION 2. The university of Hawaii at Manoa college of tropical agriculture and human resilience shall establish a center on biosecurity research, education, and extension to develop and implement innovative solutions for detecting, monitoring, eradicating, and managing invasive species by working with experts across the University of Hawaii system to:

(1) Developing predictive risk assessment and spread models for anticipated invasive species to guide the State's proactive biosecurity response plans;

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and to support HB1951 HD1.

Aloha,

Christy Martin
CGAPS Program Manager

P.S. Easley

Stephanie Easley
CGAPS Legal Fellow



Hawaii Cattlemen's Council, Inc.

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

Rep. Cory M. Chun, Chair
Rep. Matthias Kusch, Vice Chair

HB1951 HD1
RELATING TO BIOSECURITY

Wednesday, February 18, 2026, 9:30 AM
Conference Room 325 & Videoconference

Chair Chun, Vice Chair Kusch, and Members of the Committee,

The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council **supports HB1951 HD1** 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 Two-lined 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 Two-lined 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





LATE

February 17, 2026

Hawai'i State Capitol
415 S Beretania St
Honolulu, HI 96813

Aloha Chair Chun, Vice Chair Kusch, and Committee Members,

My name is Jonnetta Peters, Executive Director of Conservation Council for Hawai'i (CCH), a non-profit environmental and conservation organization who serves to protect and save native species and their habitats. CCH is also the Hawai'i affiliate of the National Wildlife Federation. **CCH STRONGLY SUPPORT HB1951 HD1.**

CTAHR should establish a Center for Biosecurity Research, Education, and Extension. Our testimony is in support, with a friendly request to modify the language to include the rest of the UH system due to the vast expertise that can (and already does) contribute to this work.

Hawai'i has been inundated with multiple invasive species, harming endangered plants, food sources, wildlife, and humans. It is time that measures be taken to curb the onslaught of harmful invasive species from entering Hawai'i, and finding solutions to curb that ones that have invaded our islands. **Therefore, I respectfully urge the Committee to PASS HB1951 HD1.**

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify,

Jonnetta Peters
Executive Director

Telephone/Fax: 224.338-6511 | email: info@conservehi.org

web: www.conservehawaii.org | P.O. Box 2923, Honolulu, HI 96802

President: Bret Nainoa Mossman | Vice President: Les Welsh | Secretary: Colleen Heyer

Treasurer: Mashuri Waite, PhD |

Directors: Erica Amundson, Puanani Anderson-Fung, Maka'ala Ka'auomoana, Steven Lee Montgomery, PhD, Emily Sarasa |

Executive Director: Jonnetta "Jonee" Peters | Operations and Events Manager: Leah Kocher

National Wildlife Federation Region 12 Director: Rachel Sprague

National Wildlife Federation Pacific Region Associate Director: Emily Martin

Kō Hawai'i leo no nā holoholona lōhiu – Hawai'i's voice for wildlife | State Affiliate of the National Wildlife Federation



LATE

House of Representatives
Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems
Wednesday, February 18, 2026
9:30 AM Conference Room 325
State Capitol

SUBJECT: Testimony – In Support of HB1951 HD1 “Relating to Biosecurity”

Aloha Chair Chun, Vice Chair Kusch, and Members of the Committee:

The O’ahu Invasive Species Committee (OISC) **strongly supports HB1951 HD1, Relating to Biosecurity**, to strengthen the biosecurity research, education, and extension capacity throughout Hawai’i.

Invasive species continue to threaten the State’s agriculture, natural resources, economy, and communities. Addressing these threats requires strong scientific capacity, rapid diagnostics, predictive modeling, effective control tools, and coordinated outreach. Investing in research infrastructure, workforce development, and applied biosecurity solutions will improve the State’s ability to prevent, detect, and respond to invasive species.

OISC supports the bill’s focus on expanding research, developing innovative detection and management strategies, enhancing extension services, and building needed laboratory and biocontainment facilities.

We respectfully request that the bill be amended to authorize the center within the broader University of Hawai’i system rather than limiting it to the University of Hawai’i at Mānoa College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience alone. Biosecurity challenges are interdisciplinary and statewide in scope, and enabling participation across the entire university system would maximize collaboration, expertise, and impact. OISC urges passage of this measure with the recommended amendment.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

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



Hawai‘i Unites is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to the conservation and protection of our environment and natural resources. We are opposed to allocating funds through bill [HB1951](#) for any *Wolbachia*-bacteria-infected mosquito releases or lab-altered mosquito releases of any kind on any of the Hawaiian Islands.

Current “innovative solutions” for invasive species in use by the University of Hawai‘i and their *Birds, Not Mosquitoes* agency partners include the release of millions of *Wolbachia*-bacteria-infected mosquitoes on our fragile ecosystems on Maui and Kaua‘i. No studies have been done on the potential significant impacts of these projects or on the serious risks to the health of our islands’ people, wildlife, and ‘āina. No environmental impact statement (EIS) has been completed for any island. Hawai‘i Unites’ [court case](#)² to stop the mosquito releases on Maui and require an EIS brought forth several significant concerns, including:

- Accidental release of female mosquitoes that bite, breed, and spread disease ([EPA guidelines](#)³ allow for the release of one female for every 250,000 males; just one female released can produce 160,000 more females through breeding of the generations in her lifespan; 3,103 females are allowed to be released weekly on [Maui](#)⁴ – up to 6,000 mosquitoes released twice weekly per acre in the 64,666-acre project area: $6,000 \times 2 \times 64,666 = 775,992,000$ mosquitoes divided by 250,000 equals 3,103 females weekly)
- Peer-reviewed studies showing *Wolbachia* bacteria can cause [increased pathogen infection](#)⁵ and [disease-spreading capability](#)^{5,6} in mosquitoes
- [Horizontal transmission](#)⁷ of *Wolbachia* bacteria to wild mosquitoes and other insect vectors of disease
- Population replacement of wild mosquitoes with lab-altered mosquitoes (as few as [three females released](#)⁸ can cause population replacement)
- Wind drift of released mosquitoes to unintended areas
- Lack of documented biosecurity protocols and pathogen screenings for the imported mosquitoes
- Risks to the health of people and animals, and the potential for the plan to cause the extinction of the native birds it is meant to protect

Tropical disease and vector expert Dr. Lorrin Pang [testified](#)⁹ as an expert witness in our [case](#)¹⁰ and has affirmed that this mosquito experiment has not been studied enough for the State of Hawai‘i and its agency partners to move forward. Dr. Pang has decades of experience as a leader in mitigating mosquito-borne diseases. He has authored over 75 publications in peer-reviewed medical journals, over 40 of which are focused specifically on mosquito-borne illnesses.

The mosquitoes currently being released in the millions on Maui and Kaua‘i are experimental. Southern house mosquitoes lab-infected with *Wolbachia* bacteria have never been documented as used for stand-alone field release anywhere in the world. The 64,666-acre East Maui project area is the largest *Wolbachia* mosquito release of any kind globally to date, and Kaua‘i’s 59,204-acre project area is the second largest.



The agencies releasing these lab-altered mosquitoes have [admitted](#)¹¹ that the plan does not include monitoring the effects of the experimental mosquitoes on forest birds.

Mass release of these mosquitoes began on Maui in November 2023. The University of Hawai‘i and their partnering agencies have produced no data publicly on the results of these mosquito releases. There has been no indication that the plan is even working for its intended purpose. Deviations from the approved plan have also been occurring since the initial phase of this program. Mosquitoes are being released by helicopter rather than by drone, exacerbating concerns about noise disturbances, disruptions to wildlife habitat, and the potential for collisions, accidents, and wildland fires. The helicopter longline release system described in the environmental assessment is not the system being used, and helicopters appear to be flying closer to the tree canopy than the approved distance, increasing the potential for adverse impacts.

As of February 2025, mosquitoes are now also being mass released on Kaua‘i. Additionally, aerial spraying of Bti larvicide on Maui and Kaua‘i in combination with the aerial release of bacteria-infected mosquitoes is now occurring. This combination of products is not part of the approved plans, and no studies have been done on the impacts of these activities to our environment. The agencies involved have not addressed concerns about potential data falsification due to the use of two different mosquito suppression products within each project area.

Hawai‘i Unites asks that the legislature amend bill [HB1951](#) to remove any funding allocations for programs and/or projects that include the release of *Wolbachia*-bacteria-infected mosquitoes or the release of lab-altered mosquitoes of any kind on any of the Hawaiian Islands. Lab-altered mosquito releases are a biosecurity threat to these islands, and we ask that the legislature remove any funding allocations for University of Hawai‘i programs that include lab-altered mosquitoes as part of the implementation of “innovative solutions for detecting, monitoring, eradicating, and managing invasive species.”

Efforts and funding to address invasive mosquitoes and mosquito-borne disease must focus on more environmentally sound approaches like habitat and stream flow restoration, which would honor the ‘āina, the culture, and the ancestral connections of the native species rather than putting them at further risk of extinction.

Mahalo,
Tina Lia
Founder
Hawai‘i Unites
HawaiiUnites.org

References



1. Department of Land and Natural Resources Fiscal Biennium FB 2025-27 Budget Overview
https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/sessions/session2025/testimony/Info_Testimony_WAM_01-13-25_DLNR.pdf
2. Hawaii Unites and Tina Lia v. Board of Land and Natural Resources, State of Hawai'i, and Department of Land and Natural Resources, State of Hawai'i (5/8/23)
https://hawaiiunites.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/2023_0508_Hawaii_Unites_and_Lia_v_BLNR_and_DLNR.pdf
3. EPA Emerging Mosquito Control Technologies
<https://www.epa.gov/regulation-biotechnology-under-tsca-and-fifra/emerging-mosquito-control-technologies>
DLNR HDOA Request to Import Southern House Mosquitoes for Immediate Field Release (6/9/22)
<https://hdoa.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/DLNR-Culex-quinquefasciatus-PA-All-Docs.pdf>
“There is an EPA reviewed value of 1 female release per 250,000 males with the MosquitoMate product. A similar value is likely to be estimated for *Culex quinquefasciatus* given that similar automation, engineering and machine learning technology is being applied to sex sorting.”
4. Final Environmental Assessment: Suppression of Invasive Mosquito Populations to Reduce Transmission of Avian Malaria to Threatened and Endangered Forest Birds on East Maui EA-FONSI (4/8/23)
https://files.hawaii.gov/dbedt/erp/Doc_Library/2023-04-08-MA-FEA-Suppression-of-Mosquitoes-on-East-Maui.pdf
“The project area includes approximately 64,666 acres...”
“Based on current estimates, we expect to release between 50 and 6,000 incompatible mosquitoes per acre per treatment (which would occur up to twice per week) depending on elevation and local temperature and capture data gathered during monitoring.”
5. “*Wolbachia* Can Enhance *Plasmodium* Infection in Mosquitoes: Implications for Malaria Control?” – Grant L. Hughes, Ana Rivero, Jason L. Rasgon (PLOS Pathogens, 9/4/14)
<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4154766/>
6. “*Wolbachia* Enhances West Nile Virus (WNV) Infection in the Mosquito *Culex tarsalis*” – Brittany L. Dodson, Grant L. Hughes, Oluwatobi Paul, Amy C. Maticchiero, Laura D. Kramer, Jason L. Rasgon (PLOS Neglected Tropical Diseases, 7/10/14)
<https://journals.plos.org/plosntds/article?id=10.1371/journal.pntd.0002965>
7. “*Wolbachia* infection in wild mosquitoes (Diptera: Culicidae): implications for transmission modes and host-endosymbiont associations in Singapore” – Huicong Ding,



Huiqing Yeo, Nalini Puniamoorthy (BMC, 12/9/20)

<https://parasitesandvectors.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13071-020-04466-8>

“*Wolbachia* Horizontal Transmission Events in Ants: What Do We Know and What Can We Learn?” – Sarah J. A. Tolley, Peter Nonacs, Panagiotis Sapountzis (Frontiers in Microbiology, 03/06/19)

<https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/microbiology/articles/10.3389/fmicb.2019.00296/full>

“The Intracellular Bacterium *Wolbachia* Uses Parasitoid Wasps as Phoretic Vectors for Efficient Horizontal Transmission” – Muhammad Z. Ahmed, Shao-Jian Li, Xia Xue, Xiang-Jie Yin, Shun-Xiang Ren, Francis M. Jiggins, Jaco M. Greeff, Bao-Li Qiu (National Center for Biotechnology Information, National Library of Medicine, 02/12/15)

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4347858/>

8. “*Wolbachia*-mediated sterility suppresses *Aedes aegypti* populations in the urban tropics” – The Project *Wolbachia* – Singapore Consortium, Ng Lee Ching (medRxiv, 6/17/21)
<https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2021.06.16.21257922v1.full>
9. Transcript of Hearing 7/21/23: Plaintiffs’ Motion for Temporary Restraining Order and Preliminary Injunction
<https://hawaiiunites.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/HIUnitesvBLNR072123Audio.pdf>
10. Plaintiffs’ Motion for Temporary Restraining Order and Preliminary Injunction (6/20/23)
https://hawaiiunites.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/2023_0620_Hawaii_Unites_and_Lia_v_BLNR_and_DLNR_Plaintiffs_Motion_for_TRO_Preliminary_Injunction_Filed_All_Documents.pdf
11. Final Environmental Assessment for Use of *Wolbachia*-based Incompatible Insect Technique for the Suppression of Non-native Southern House Mosquito Populations on Kaua’i EA-FONSI (10/13/23)
https://files.hawaii.gov/dbedt/erp/Doc_Library/2023-10-23-KA-FEA-Wolbachia-based-Suppression-of-Mosquitoes-on-Kauai.pdf
“Monitoring of birds is beyond the scope of this EA.”

HB-1951-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/13/2026 6:09:43 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/18/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Johnnie-Mae L. Perry	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry, Support

1951 HB RELATING TO BIOSECURITY.

HB-1951-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 8:28:25 AM

Testimony for AGR on 2/18/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Glen Kagamida	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

SUPPORT

LATE

HB-1951-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 4:35:54 PM
Testimony for AGR on 2/18/2026 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

Strong support

LATE

HB-1951-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 7:59:37 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/18/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jason Moniz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

HB 1951, HD1 – CENTER FOR BIOSECURITY RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND EXTENSION

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS
February 18, 2026

Please support HB 1951, HD1, which establishes a Center for Biosecurity Research, Education, and Extension within the University of Hawai‘i College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience.

- This bill supports practical, science-based work that connects research with real world application.
- It also helps prepare students and professionals with the skills needed to work in agriculture and biosecurity-related careers, strengthening Hawai‘i’s long-term capacity to address these challenges.
- Having strong research, diagnostics, and extension support helps producers respond quickly and protect their operations.