



# 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  
February 13, 2026 at 2:00 p.m.

By

Bonnie Irwin

Chancellor

University of Hawai'i at Hilo

HB 2139 HD1 – RELATING TO INVASIVE SPECIES.

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on HB 2139 HD1. The University of Hawai'i at Hilo (UH Hilo) supports HB 2139 HD1 which will allocate funding to essential research needed to address the growing threat posed by the Queensland Longhorn Beetle (QLB) in Hawai'i.

As QLB spreads across East Hawai'i, it has been devastating to farmers who are losing cacao, citrus, avocado, and several other crop plants to these larvae. By targeting profitable crops on which local farmers depend, QLB has the potential to cause millions of dollars in losses to Hawai'i farmers. QLB also has ecological consequences. At UH Hilo's restoration site in Keaukaha, we have seen widespread mortality of kukui and 'ulu trees as a result of QLB damage. The death of these key canopy trees allows for invasive plants to move in and take over the forest. We must address this issue to mitigate the harm QLB can cause to local farms, forests, and community spaces.

Nematode biocontrol offers a promising solution to the issue of QLB. In an approach developed by scientists at USDA-ARS, locally isolated nematodes, *Heterorhabditis indica*, are injected into QLB-infested trees, where they then selectively target and kill the larvae. UH Hilo research on kukui and 'ulu trees in the summer of 2025 found that in most cases, nematode treatment either reduces or eliminates QLB infection. Numerous accounts from local growers also reflect the effectiveness of this treatment. Additionally, *H. indica* are non-toxic and safe to other organisms like cattle and their human handlers. This biocontrol gives us an opportunity to proactively control QLB before it spreads across Hawai'i and to other islands.

While this biocontrol is effective, it remains very time intensive and often more than one treatment is necessary to eliminate QLB in the tree altogether. It is therefore essential that we invest in research on the life cycle of QLB and implementation of different treatment methods that might be faster or more effective. It is essential to develop procedures to scale up the treatment of trees on large areas of land and to assist local farmers. Such research will contribute to reducing QLB populations in East Hawai'i and support growers in protecting their trees using a non-toxic method. In addition, a low-

cost, effective treatment that is scalable will be extremely valuable if QLB eventually makes it to other islands.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 2139 HD1.

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  
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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  
HIGHER EDUCATION

Friday, February 13, 2026  
2:00 PM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 309

In consideration of  
HOUSE BILL 2139, HOUSE DRAFT 1  
RELATING TO INVASIVE SPECIES

House Bill 2139, House Draft 1 appropriates funds to the University of Hawai'i to conduct a study on effective treatment methods to reduce populations of the Queensland longhorn beetle. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports this measure, provided it does not replace or adversely impact priorities outlined in the Executive Supplemental Budget request.**

*Acalolepta aesthetica*, often called the Queensland longhorn beetle (QLB), poses a serious threat to many tropical plant species in Hawai'i. QLBs tend to attack stressed, weakened, and dying trees. Larvae bore into trunks and branches as they develop, which can severely weaken small trees. Repeated attacks may eventually kill the trees. Of particular concern to the Department, federal researchers have confirmed that QLBs have been found attacking the native plant alahe'e. This invasive beetle most often infests culturally important plants in Hawai'i, such as kukui and 'ulu. It has also decimated cacao trees on the east side of Hawai'i Island, causing several cacao farmers to abandon the crop.

By 2026, nearly 20 plant species have been identified as larval hosts for QLB in East Hawai'i. As this invasive beetle spreads further, the list of vulnerable plants is likely to grow.

There are no well-known traditional pesticides that effectively control tree-larva infestations over the long term. However, when integrated into a pest management program, active systemic

insecticide treatments at the appropriate stage of beetle development, combined with cultural and mechanical controls, may provide reliable management options.

Hawai'i requires effective long-term management tools and integrated pest management programs to identify, treat, and reduce QLB populations at all life stages. Therefore, the Department strongly endorses funding further research on QLB to properly address this significant invasive threat.

Mahalo for the opportunity to comment on this measure.



**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**

**Friday, February 13, 2026  
2:00pm  
Conference Room 325 & Videoconference  
State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street**

**RE: HB2139 RELATING TO INVASIVE SPECIES.**

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.

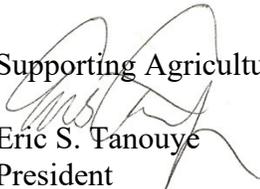
The Hawaii Floriculture and Nursery Association (HFNA) **SUPPORTS House Bill 2139** appropriates funds to the University of Hawai'i to conduct a study on effective treatment methods to reduce populations of the Queensland Longhorn Beetle

We appreciate any efforts to help strengthen and enforce Biosecurity. The Long Horn Beetle has started to become a concern for our Floriculture Nurserymen and Women. We support this pro-active attempt to conduct a study so we can better understand how to fight and repel this invasive pest.

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](mailto:eric@greenpointnursery.com).

Supporting Agriculture and Hawaii,

  
Eric S. Tanouye  
President  
Hawaii Floriculture and Nursery Association



P.O. Box 253, Kunia, Hawai'i 96759  
Phone: (808) 848-2074; Fax: (808) 848-1921  
e-mail [info@hfbf.org](mailto:info@hfbf.org); [www.hfbf.org](http://www.hfbf.org)

February 13, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

**TESTIMONY ON HB 2139, HD1**  
**RELATING TO INVASIVE SPECIES**

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 2139, HD1**, which appropriates funds to the University of Hawaii to conduct a study on effective treatment methods to reduce populations of the Queensland Longhorn Beetle.

The Queensland Longhorn Beetle (QLB) is an invasive pest that targets many agriculturally important and culturally significant plants, including 'ulu, cacao, avocado, citrus, hibiscus, and kukui. The first known detection in Hawai'i occurred in Puna in 2009, and since then, it has expanded its host range and is now established in Hilo and throughout the Hāmākua Coast, with confirmed presence as far north as Honoka'a and Āhualoa. Once established, QLB infestations can result in severe damage or death of host plants.

Although the Queensland Longhorn Beetle is a relatively newer invasive threat compared to other pests Hawai'i has faced, its spread underscores a familiar and concerning pattern. When invasive species are not addressed early and effectively, they become far more costly and difficult to manage over time. Farmers and ranchers are often the first to experience these impacts directly, through lost production, increased management costs, and reduced viability of certain crops.

HB 2139, HD1 represents a proactive step by investing in research to identify effective treatment and control methods before this pest becomes further entrenched statewide. Supporting research through the University of Hawai'i is consistent with past efforts to

strengthen Hawai'i's invasive species response by pairing science-based solutions with on-the-ground agricultural realities.

More broadly, this measure highlights the need for Hawai'i to continue strengthening its biosecurity and invasive species prevention systems. Without sustained and coordinated efforts to address invasive species at all stages, prevention, detection, research, and response, Hawai'i will continue to face new pest introductions that threaten agricultural production. This directly undermines shared goals such as increasing local food production, expanding Farm to School and institutional purchasing programs, and strengthening food system resilience.

HFB supports HB 2139, HD1 as part of a larger strategy to protect Hawai'i's agricultural sector, environment, and food security. Addressing invasive species early and effectively is essential if we expect farmers and ranchers to meet the State's long-term agricultural goals.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important measure.



House of Representatives  
Committee on Higher Education  
Friday, February 13, 2026  
2:00 PM Conference Room 309 & Videoconference  
State Capitol

### **Testimony in Support of HB2139 HD1**

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

The Coordinating Group on Alien Pest Species (CGAPS) is **in support of HB2139 HD1**, *Relating to Invasive Species*, which provides funds to the University of Hawaii to study effective treatment methods to reduce populations of the Queensland Longhorn beetle (QLB).

As noted in the bill, QLB can damage or kill a number of agriculturally and culturally significant tree species, including breadfruit, kukui, citrus, cacao, avocado, and many others. At this time, QLB are found in limited areas of Hawaii Island. Unfortunately, there is no treatment for QLB infestation. The only control method is to destroy infested trees, chip them in place, and avoid moving infested material to new areas.

The funds provided by HB2139 HD1 will allow the University of Hawaii to study effective treatments for QLB to reduce population numbers, and, hopefully, prevent the spread of the pest to new areas and islands.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and to support HB2139 HD1.

Aloha,

Christy Martin  
CGAPS Program Manager

Stephanie Easley  
CGAPS Legal Fellow



February 12, 2026

To: Chair Andrew T. Garrett, Vice Chair Terez Amato, and the House Committee on Higher Education

Subject: **HB2139 HD1**, Relating to Invasive Species

Aloha,

I am writing in **strong support of HB2139 HD1**, which appropriates funding to the University of Hawai'i to conduct a study on effective treatment methods to reduce populations of the Queensland longhorn beetle (*Acalolepta aesthetica*).

The Queensland longhorn beetle is a highly destructive invasive species that poses serious risks to Hawai'i's agricultural production, native forests, and culturally significant trees. The wood-boring insect has already expanded its host range to important crops such as 'ulu (breadfruit), cacao, avocado, citrus, as well as culturally significant species like kukui. During its larval stage, it bores deep into tree trunks of its host, causing internal damage by feeding, ultimately compromising the structural integrity of the tree that may even lead to plant death.

If left unmanaged, the continued spread of this invasive beetle threatens not only farmers and local food systems, but also broader ecosystem health. Research has shown that invasive wood-boring insects can accelerate forest decline, reduce biodiversity, and undermine land stewardship efforts. Intervention through research-based management strategies is critical to preventing widespread and irreversible damage further from its current state.

By funding research through the University of Hawai'i, the State can generate practical data to inform future management strategies, protect vulnerable crops, and preserve both agricultural and native forest resources. As an institution with expertise in tropical agriculture, invasive species management, and ecological research, the University is uniquely positioned to develop treatment methods tailored to Hawai'i's specific environmental conditions and agricultural realities. Supporting this research strengthens local scientific data and ensures solutions are grounded in place-based research rather than outside models that may not fit Hawai'i's ecosystems.

For these reasons, I urge the committee to pass HB2139 HD1, which supports invasive species prevention related to the Queensland longhorn beetle, protects agriculture, and helps conserve Hawai'i's lands and resources.

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

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[1] U.S. Geological Survey. (n.d.). Invader of Hawai'i: Queensland longhorn beetle (*Acalolepta aesthetica*). Pacific Island Ecosystems Research Center.

<https://www.usgs.gov/pacific-island-ecosystems-research-center/science/invader-hawaii-queensland-longhorn-beetle#data>

[2] Hawai'i Department of Agriculture. (2020). New Pest Advisory: *Acalolepta aesthetica* (Queensland longhorn beetle).

<https://dab.hawaii.gov/pi/files/2020/02/Acalolepta-aesthetica-NPA-2-3-2020.pdf>

**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.

BIISC  
23 E. Kawili St.  
Hilo, HI 96720  
(808) 933-3340  
[www.biisc.org](http://www.biisc.org)



Feb 12, 2026

House Committee on Higher Education Hearing  
RE: HB2139

Aloha Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and members of the committee,

On behalf of the Big Island Invasive Species Committee (BIISC), I write in strong support of HB2139. We are in dire need of dedicated researchers to assist with battling the Queensland Longhorn Beetle or QLB (*Acololepta aesthetica*) to protect our natural resources on the Big Island.

As an organization that deals with many invasive pests, we must emphasize how alarming the QLB invasion is. While many bugs are fairly host specific - even the high profile CRB has a relatively narrow host profile of palms and a handful of plants - QLB has been confirmed in more than 15 relatively unrelated species of plants in Hawaii, with several more suspected to be hosts. Many agricultural and landscape plants are on the list, including ulu (breadfruit), multiple varieties of citrus, cycads, hibiscus, mulberry, passionfruit, croton, elderberry, but by far the most critically affected species has been cacao. Cacao farmers here tend to be small-scale agriculturalists, supplying a high quality crop to create a unique, value-added product in the form of award-winning chocolate. It is a heartening success story - until those farmers relay stories of grueling hours spent meticulously searching every branch of every tree, trying to yank out the larvae that are girdling trees to death just under the bark. Multiple farmers have told me they either gave up on cacao, or have sold their farms, unable to keep up with the damage and demands of QLB.

A recent study published by USGS researchers in Hawaii found only one tree is more appealing to QLB than cacao - our official state tree, the kukui. Kukui is one of the original species brought by Polynesian voyagers over 1,000 years ago. It holds deep significance in Hawaiian culture and is an integral part of the landscapes that shape Hawaii. At least one native species, the alahe'e, has also been identified as a host for QLB, and the only reason we do not know whether QLB attacks other natives is because there has been no research to determine this. Natural areas have not yet been surveyed to determine the extent of QLB infestation. In the ten years since it was first known to be naturalized here, QLB has rapidly expanded its range from central Puna, through Hilo, and along the Hamakua coast. It is now present in an area of our island that exceeds the size of the entire island of Oahu.

Before QLB arrived in Hawaii, it had never shown up as a pest elsewhere in the world, so there was little knowledge available. Through the generosity and cooperative efforts of several different programs, including USDA ARS and USFS researchers in Hilo and UH-Hilo faculty and students, there have been some gains in learning more about QLB and identifying at least one promising control (entomopathogenic nematodes) has developed. Now is the time to build on those efforts and move forward with dedicated researchers who can tackle this insect and develop the methods needed to find and fight QLB. It is only a matter of time before QLB arrives on other islands, and we should arm ourselves with the understanding and tools that are needed to mount an effective response.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Franny Brewer, Program Manager



**LATE**

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Kaiea Medeiros  
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Maui

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Lahaina, Maui

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Moloka'i

Negus Manna  
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India Clark  
North Shore, O'ahu

Christian Zuckerman  
Wai'anae, O'ahu

Rachel LaDrig  
Waimānalo, O'ahu

Vincent Kimura  
Honolulu, O'ahu

Natalie Urminska  
Kaua'i

Aloha Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and Members of the House Higher Education Committee,

The Hawai'i Farmers Union is a 501(c)(5) agricultural advocacy nonprofit representing a network of over 2,500 family farmers and their supporters across the Hawaiian Islands. **HFU supports HB2139.**

Since 2014, the Queensland Longhorn Beetle has expanded its host range to nearly 20 species, including critical food security staples like 'ulu, avocado, and citrus. Without the treatment methods funded by this bill, these foundational crops face potential statewide collapse. This wood-boring pest kills mature trees, effectively wiping out the generational equity and economic viability of small-scale diversified farms in Puna and across East Hawaii.

Appropriating funds to the University of Hawaii for population reduction studies provides the necessary data to move from reactive crisis management to proactive eradication, shifting the burden of biosecurity off the individual farmer and onto a coordinated state response.

Invasive species are persistent threat to the economic survival of Hawaii's agricultural sector, early rapid action is the necessary response.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Hunter Heavilin  
Advocacy Director  
Hawai'i Farmers Union

**HB-2139-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 5:20:39 PM

Testimony for HED on 2/13/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Glen Kagamida	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

STRONG SUPPORT!!!

**HB-2139-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 1:07:48 PM

Testimony for HED on 2/13/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Waileia Tupou	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Chun, Vice Chair Kusch, and members of the committee,

My name is Waileia Tupou, and I am a resident of Kaimukī, O‘ahu. I am writing to urge you to support House Bill 2139 to provide funding for projects addressing the growing threat posed by the Queensland Longhorn Beetle (QLB) in Hawai‘i. QLB targets many agriculturally important plants, including ‘ulu, cacao, avocado, and citrus, as well as culturally significant trees such as kukui. Its continued spread across East Hawai‘i is causing increasing damage to local farms, forests, and community spaces. As a result of QLB larvae burrowing into mature plants like cacao and citrus, farmers in east Hawai‘i are facing increased crop losses, higher management costs, and severe damage to or death of established crop plants. As the range of QLB is rapidly expanding, it poses a threat to food producers across Hawai‘i and must be addressed.

This bill will allow researchers at the University of Hawai‘i in Hilo to continue research on the effectiveness of nematodes as a biocontrol for QLB. This biocontrol offers an opportunity to be proactive about managing QLB populations before it spreads to other islands and causes widespread devastation like we have seen happen with the Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle. *H.indica*, a local strain of nematode that was originally collected in Hilo Bay sands, has been shown by USDA ARS to successfully reduce populations of QLB in tropical orchard crops. Many farmers applying this biocontrol have seen the health of their trees improve. Preliminary results from a pilot study carried out by the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo at a site in Hilo in 2025 show that for most kukui (74.2%) and ‘ulu (80%) trees, nematode application either reduced or completely eliminated QLB infection in the tree. For this being such a novel biocontrol effort, these results are extremely promising.

However, more research is needed if we hope to control the spread of QLB. HB 2139 would fund research into different methods of applying *H. indica* to infected trees to make it less time-consuming and more effective for land managers to apply this low-cost approach. This research will contribute to reducing QLB populations in East Hawai‘i and support growers in protecting their trees. In addition, a low-cost, effective treatment that is scalable will be extremely valuable if QLB eventually makes it to other islands. Proactive action at the state level will protect the economic vitality of Hawai‘i’s agricultural sector and reduce long-term costs to local growers.

Taking action against QLB is essential to our environmental health, local food security, and cultural heritage. HB 2139 would make a meaningful difference in our community for generations to come. Mahalo for your commitment to supporting Hawai'i's agricultural communities.

Sincerely,

Waileia Tupou

96816

**HB-2139-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 1:10:44 PM

Testimony for HED on 2/13/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Thea Shapiro	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Chun, Vice Chair Kusch, and members of the committee, My name is Thea Shapiro, and I am a resident of Puna, Hawai'i. I am writing to urge you to support House Bill 2139 to provide funding for projects addressing the growing threat posed by the Queensland Longhorn Beetle (QLB) in Hawai'i. QLB targets many agriculturally important plants, including 'ulu, cacao, avocado, and citrus, as well as culturally significant trees such as kukui. Its continued spread across East Hawai'i is causing increasing damage to local farms, forests, and community spaces.

As a result of QLB larvae burrowing into mature plants like cacao and citrus, farmers in east Hawai'i are facing increased crop losses, higher management costs, and severe damage to or death of established crop plants. As the range of QLB is rapidly expanding, it poses a threat to food producers across Hawai'i and must be addressed.

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Many farmers applying this biocontrol have seen the health of their trees improve. Preliminary results from a pilot study carried out by the University of Hawai'i at Hilo at a site in Hilo in 2025 show that for most kukui (74.2%) and 'ulu (80%) trees, nematode application either reduced or completely eliminated QLB infection in the tree. For this being such a novel biocontrol effort, these results are extremely promising.

However, more research is needed if we hope to control the spread of QLB. HB 2139 would fund research into different methods of applying *H. indica* to infected trees to make it less time consuming and more effective for land managers to apply this low-cost approach. This research will contribute to reducing QLB populations in East Hawai'i and support growers in protecting their trees. In addition, a low-cost, effective treatment that is scalable will be extremely valuable if QLB eventually makes it to other islands. Proactive action at the state level will protect the economic vitality of Hawai'i's agricultural sector and reduce long-term costs to local growers.

Taking action against QLB is essential to our environmental health, local food security, and cultural heritage. HB 2139 would make a meaningful difference in our community for generations to come. Mahalo for your commitment to supporting Hawai'i's agricultural communities.

Sincerely,

Thea Shapiro

96778

**LATE**

Aloha Chair Chun, Vice Chair Kusch, and members of the committee,

My name is Susan Bassett. I am a resident of Pepeekeo on Hawaii Island and owner of Mauna Kea Cacao LLC. I found Queensland Longhorn Beetle (QLB) on our farm for the first time three weeks ago. I recognized the pest immediately, due to University of Hawai'i at Hilo research and outreach activities.

I am writing to urge you to support House Bill 2139 to provide funding for projects to thwart the growing threat posed by QLB in Hawai'i. This voracious pest targets cacao trees and many other agriculturally important plants, including 'ulu, avocado, and citrus, as well as culturally significant trees such as kukui. Its continued spread across East Hawai'i is causing increasing damage to local farms, forests, and community spaces.

Bill 2139 will allow researchers at the University of Hawai'i in Hilo to continue research on the effectiveness of nematodes as a biocontrol for QLB. This biocontrol offers an opportunity to be proactive about managing QLB populations before it spreads to other islands and causes widespread devastation similar to that seen with the Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle. *H. indica*, a local strain of nematode that was originally collected in Hilo Bay sands, has been shown by USDA ARS to successfully reduce populations of QLB in tropical orchard crops.

Preliminary results from a pilot study carried out by the University of Hawai'i at Hilo at a site in Hilo in 2025 show that for most kukui (74.2%) and 'ulu (80%) trees, nematode application either reduced or completely eliminated QLB infection in the tree. These results are extremely promising.

However, more research is needed if we hope to control the spread of QLB. HB 2139 would fund research into different methods of applying *H. indica* to infected trees to make it less time consuming and more effective for farmers to apply nematode treatments. This research will contribute to reducing QLB populations in East Hawai'i and help me protect our cacao trees. A low-cost, effective treatment that is scalable will be extremely valuable if QLB eventually makes it to other islands. Proactive action at the state level will protect the economic vitality of Hawai'i's agricultural sector.

Taking action against QLB is essential to environmental health, local food security, and our cultural heritage. HB 2139 would make a meaningful difference in our community for generations to come. Mahalo for your commitment to supporting Hawai'i's agricultural communities.

Sincerely,

Susan Bassett, Mauna Kea Cacao LLC  
96783

**LATE**

HB 2139 Written Testimony in Support  
Ke Aloha Representatives,

We are small sub-urban 'town farmers' with an agroforestry orchard of over 40 different species of fruiting trees, and donate over a ton of food every year to the Hawai'i Island community- including food banks, public outreach events and neighbors. We are doing the Food Security work that many legislators are calling their constituents to do.

In 2020, our little Keaau neighborhood was hit with Queensland Longhorn Beetle (*Acalopecta aeshetica*) – QLB, and our orchard trees began to show the indications of impact by March of 2020, just before the lockdown. In the beginning of our infestation, the only treatment was to go through our orchard and physically check each and every limb for a soft area & dig out the larvae. We have lost a few citrus trees and all of our lilikoi, and we have had to cut back many infested limbs from our remaining host trees.

Deb Ward, a good friend, introduced us to the nematode treatment BIISC was investigating, and we have used this for a few years with success, to a point. We have neighbor unattended properties (fallow orchards) that allow re-infestation of QLB to our small orchard. At each re-infestation, we inject nematodes into our infested trees.

I am not sure if you are aware, during the end of January and the first week of February, there are no nematodes available for the public, and we have a new outbreak. We know there have been funding hiccups over the past few years that have made the consistent supply of nematodes something farmers cannot count on.

Each time we are re-infested with QLB, this infestation can grow in strength, expanded host preference and in range of infestation around Hawai'i.

This should not be new information for any legislator. You have seen this in other pest infestations, however the host plant selection of QLB (attached) is extensive. Local news covered the devastating effects of QLB in 2019, and National news in 2025 (links below).

In a USGS survey in 2023, QLB was identified around Honoka`a (link below). QLB can spread from tree to tree, also at the speed of any vehicle, as Stacey Chun (DOAB - entomology) has noted: that larvae can emerge from logs that have been stacked in his facility for months, so all firewood and smoke-meat wood can spread QLB.

I have attached the most recent QLB host list, more host species have been added every year. This list includes native, canoe, culturally significant, agriculturally significant and ornamental trees used around Hawai'i.

I cannot understand any legislator that would have this information and not make sure there is funding to halt, and possibly even reverse the spread and agricultural impact of this pest species.

A hui hou!

Carey Yost (808)987-3461

**Hawai'i News Now 10/30/2019 coverage of QLB:** <https://www.hawaii.newsnow.com/video/2019/10/31/farmers-scramble-contain-invasive-beetle-attacking-big-island-crops/>

**USNews 11/07/25 Coverage of QLB:** <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/hawaii/articles/2025-11-07/farmers-want-hawaii-to-tackle-the-tree-killing-queensland-longhorn-beetle-before-it-spreads>

**Dept. of Ag. 12/10/2023 Updated Pest Advisory with QLB distribution range in Hamakua:**

<https://dab.hawaii.gov/pi/files/2023/12/Acalopecta-aesthetica-NPA-12-13-2023.pdf>

## Queensland Longhorn Beetle- *A.aesthetica* (QLB) Host Plants

This list represents Orders of magnitude of potential damage to Hawai`i Agriculture. This is not hyperbole, as there are over a dozen Order clades of plants repressed here!!!

**Trumpet tree (*Cecropia obtusifolia*)**

<https://dab.hawaii.gov/pi/files/2025/12/Acalolepta-aesthetica-NPA-12-08-2025-2.pdf>

**Cacao (*Theobroma cacao*)**

<https://dab.hawaii.gov/pi/files/2025/12/Acalolepta-aesthetica-NPA-12-08-2025-2.pdf>

**‘ulu (*Artocarpus altilis*; breadfruit)**

<https://dab.hawaii.gov/pi/files/2025/12/Acalolepta-aesthetica-NPA-12-08-2025-2.pdf>

**Citrus (*Citrus* sp.)**

<https://dab.hawaii.gov/pi/files/2025/12/Acalolepta-aesthetica-NPA-12-08-2025-2.pdf>

**Avocado (*Persea americana*)**

<https://dab.hawaii.gov/pi/files/2025/12/Acalolepta-aesthetica-NPA-12-08-2025-2.pdf>

**Kukui (*Aleurites moluccanus*)**

<https://dab.hawaii.gov/pi/files/2025/12/Acalolepta-aesthetica-NPA-12-08-2025-2.pdf>

**Queen sago (*Cycas circinalis*)**

<https://dab.hawaii.gov/pi/files/2025/12/Acalolepta-aesthetica-NPA-12-08-2025-2.pdf>

**Mulberry (*Morus alba*)**

<https://dab.hawaii.gov/pi/files/2025/12/Acalolepta-aesthetica-NPA-12-08-2025-2.pdf>

**Norfolk pine (*Araucaria heterophylla*)**

<https://dab.hawaii.gov/pi/files/2025/12/Acalolepta-aesthetica-NPA-12-08-2025-2.pdf>

**Moringa, kalamungay (*Moringa oleifera*)**

<https://dab.hawaii.gov/pi/files/2025/12/Acalolepta-aesthetica-NPA-12-08-2025-2.pdf>

**Gunpowder tree (*Trema orientalis*)**

<https://dab.hawaii.gov/pi/files/2025/12/Acalolepta-aesthetica-NPA-12-08-2025-2.pdf>

**Hibiscus (*Hibiscus* sp.)**

<https://dab.hawaii.gov/pi/files/2025/12/Acalolepta-aesthetica-NPA-12-08-2025-2.pdf>

**Croton (*Codiaeum variegatum*)**

<https://dab.hawaii.gov/pi/files/2025/12/Acalolepta-aesthetica-NPA-12-08-2025-2.pdf>

**Lilikoi, passion fruit (*Passiflora edulis*)**

<https://dab.hawaii.gov/pi/files/2025/12/Acalolepta-aesthetica-NPA-12-08-2025-2.pdf>

**Elderberry (*Sambucus nigra*)**

<https://dab.hawaii.gov/pi/files/2025/12/Acalolepta-aesthetica-NPA-12-08-2025-2.pdf>

**-Cycads -ornamental (order Cycadales)**

<https://dab.hawaii.gov/pi/files/2025/12/Acalolepta-aesthetica-NPA-12-08-2025-2.pdf>

**-Durian (*Durio* sp.)**

<https://dab.hawaii.gov/pi/files/2025/12/Acalolepta-aesthetica-NPA-12-08-2025-2.pdf>

**-Tree spinach, chaya (*Cnidoscolus aconitifolius*)**

<https://dab.hawaii.gov/pi/files/2025/12/Acalolepta-aesthetica-NPA-12-08-2025-2.pdf>

**-Jade Plant (*Crassula ovata*)**

**\*\*\*NATIVE AND ENDEMIC NOT ON STATE LIST:**

“Host preferences of non-native *Acalolepta aesthetica* (Coleoptera: Cerambycidae) on the Island of Hawai`i” Sofaer et.al. 2025. <https://resjournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/afe.70015>

**LATE**

**HB-2139-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 8:54:54 PM

Testimony for HED on 2/13/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jim Klyman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I have been fighting this pest since 2020 when I witnessed this beetle taking out 4 of our absentee neighbors citrus trees. We attempted to remove infected tree limbs and burn the branches rather than keep the host materials onsite and house additional brood (nor did we take the limbs to greenwaste where it could also spread to who knows what else). This is no known spray or treatment (other than a systemic pesticide that makes the citrus fruit inedible for a year (a neonicotinoid that has devastating destructive effects on pollinators that visit treated plants). This was no option at all for me, so we waited for additional support and study from the University CTHAR group, BIIS, and the State Vector office in Hilo. While these efforts have potential, the destruction of hundreds of crop trees in Puna continues.

To find out that part time interns that have been helping to test and raise natural indigenous biocontrols for the beetle was being cut due to funding loss was a slap in the face that the expanding loss of critical crop plants was being ignored. I whole heartedly support funding for several personell if this will speed the prevention and spread of the QLB territory. The QLB corp destruction make the CRB palm issue pale in comparison, yet this pest is better funded!

Jim Kluman

Keaau 96749

**LATE**

**HB-2139-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 8:58:03 PM

Testimony for HED on 2/13/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lilah Shapiro	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

**My name is Lilah Shapiro, and I am from Puna, Hawai‘i. I work with Liko Nā Pilina, a forest restoration project through UH Hilo, where my focus is on the Queensland longhorn beetle and the use of nematodes as a biological control.**

**I strongly support HB 2139. This bill will allow researchers, such as myself, at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo to continue research on the effectiveness of nematodes as a biocontrol for QLB. This biocontrol offers an opportunity to be proactive about managing QLB populations before it spreads to other islands and causes widespread devastation like we have seen with the Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle.**

**I have seen firsthand the devastating impact QLB has had on our forests. At the Liko Nā Pilina restoration site, many canopy trees have been lost to QLB, reducing shade and worsening the encroachment of invasive plants. With this nematode treatment, I witnessed trees go from being covered in oozing infection and losing all their leaves to completely recovering. It is remarkable to finally have a tool that actually works to fight an extremely destructive invasive pests. However, we still have so many questions to answer. This bill would allow us to research the best methods for applying this biocontrol so it can be scaled up for farmers with hundreds of trees. Which would be extremely important to have if it continues to spread. This is vital to protect the economic vitality of Hawai‘i's agricultural sector and reduce long-term costs to local growers.**

**One of the most rewarding parts has been working with farmers and community members who have experienced devastating losses from QLB. Seeing their relief when they learn this treatment works shows just how urgent this crisis has been and how much this solution means to our communities. However it has also showed us how important more research is to scale this treatment up.**

**We have also worked with students at Hawaii academy of arts and sciences. Working with them hands on to treat trees themselves and collect long term data monitoring their infection and health has shown them how everyone has a kuleana in protecting our ecosystems and we can all be a part of the science behind it. I’ve heard the excitement in their voices when they report back to me that the trees are doing better. This is getting them direct experience in science and aloha aina work.**

**However, we need more funding in order to continue this work. HB 2139 would allow us to continue outreach and community involvement in this project and scale up this treatment.**

**Taking action against QLB is essential to our environmental health, local food security, and cultural heritage. HB 2139 would make a meaningful difference in our community for generations to come. Mahalo for your commitment to supporting Hawai'i's agricultural communities.**

**LATE**

**HB-2139-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 9:34:47 PM

Testimony for HED on 2/13/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Emma Stierhoff	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the committee,

My name is Emma Stierhoff, and I am a Lead Ecological Technician at the University of Hawai‘i Hilo under the Liko Nā Pilina Restoration Project. I am writing to express my support of HB 2139, which will allocate funding to essential research needed to address the growing threat posed by the Queensland Longhorn Beetle (QLB) in Hawai‘i. As QLB spreads across East Hawai‘i, it has been devastating to farmers who are losing cacao, citrus, avocado, and several other crop plants to these larvae. By targeting many profitable crops on which local farmers depend, QLB has the potential to cause millions of dollars in losses to Hawai‘i farmers. In a 2025 survey by the Hawai‘i Department of Agriculture, the top issue identified by Hawai‘i growers was invasive species and pest management. QLB also has ecological consequences. At our restoration site in Keaukaha, we have seen widespread mortality of kukui and ‘ulu trees as a result of QLB damage. The death of these key canopy trees allows for invasive plants to move in and take over the forest. We must address this issue to mitigate the harm QLB can cause to local farms, forests, and community spaces.

Nematode biocontrol offers a promising solution to the issue of QLB. In an approach developed by scientists at USDA-ARS, locally isolated nematodes, *Heterorhabditis indica*, are injected into QLB-infested trees, where they then selectively target and kill the larvae. Research we did on kukui and ‘ulu trees in the summer of 2025 found that in most cases, nematode treatment either reduces or eliminates QLB infection. Numerous accounts from local growers also reflect the effectiveness of this treatment. Additionally, *H. indica* are non-toxic and safe to other organisms like cattle and their human handlers. This biocontrol gives us an opportunity to proactively control QLB before it spreads across Hawai‘i and to other islands.

While this biocontrol is effective, it remains very time intensive and often more than one treatment is necessary to eliminate QLB in the tree altogether. It is therefore essential that we invest in research that will contribute to establishing faster and more effective means of treating. This will allow us to develop procedures to scale up the treatment of trees on large areas of land and to assist local farmers. Such research will contribute to reducing QLB populations in East Hawai‘i and support growers in protecting their trees using a non-toxic method. In addition, a low-cost, effective treatment that is scalable will be extremely valuable if QLB eventually makes it to other islands.

Please vote for HB 2139 to help mitigate the spread of Queensland Longhorn Beetle in Hawai‘i, supporting our local farmers and our ‘āina.

Mahalo nui for your time,

Emma Stierhoff

**LATE**

Aloha Chair Chun, Vice Chair Kusch, and members of the committee,

My name is Lichun Huang, and I am a resident of the Island of Hawaii. I am writing to urge you to support House Bill 2139 to provide funding for projects addressing the growing threat posed by the Queensland Longhorn Beetle (QLB) in Hawai'i. QLB targets many agriculturally important plants, including 'ulu, cacao, avocado, and citrus, as well as culturally significant trees such as kukui. Its continued spread across East Hawai'i is causing increasing damage to local farms, forests, and community spaces.

As a result of QLB larvae burrowing into mature plants like cacao and citrus, farmers in east Hawai'i are facing increased crop losses, higher management costs, and severe damage to or death of established crop plants. As the range of QLB is rapidly expanding, it poses a threat to food producers across Hawai'i and must be addressed.

This bill will allow researchers at the University of Hawai'i in Hilo to continue research on the effectiveness of nematodes as a biocontrol for QLB. This biocontrol offers an opportunity to be proactive about managing QLB populations before it spreads to other islands and causes widespread devastation like we have seen happen with the Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle. *H. indica*, a local strain of nematode that was originally collected in Hilo Bay sands, has been shown by USDA ARS to successfully reduce populations of QLB in tropical orchard crops. Many farmers applying this biocontrol have seen the health of their trees improve. Preliminary results from a pilot study carried out by the University of Hawai'i at Hilo at a site in Hilo in 2025 show that for most kukui (74.2%) and 'ulu (80%) trees, nematode application either reduced or completely eliminated QLB infection in the tree. For this being such a novel biocontrol effort, these results are extremely promising.

However, more research is needed if we hope to control the spread of QLB. HB 2139 would fund research into different methods of applying *H. indica* to infected trees to make it less time consuming and more effective for land managers to apply this low-cost approach. This research will contribute to reducing QLB populations in East Hawai'i and support growers in protecting their trees. In addition, a low-cost, effective treatment that is scalable will be extremely valuable if QLB eventually makes it to other islands. Proactive action at the state level will protect the economic vitality of Hawai'i's agricultural sector and reduce long-term costs to local growers.

Taking action against QLB is essential to our environmental health, local food security, and cultural heritage. HB 2139 would make a meaningful difference in our community for generations to come. Mahalo for your commitment to supporting Hawai'i's agricultural communities.

Sincerely,  
Lichun Huang  
Pinapinao Farm  
Papaikou 96781

**LATE**

**HB-2139-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/13/2026 8:37:56 AM

Testimony for HED on 2/13/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Angelina Bezhenar	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**To: Chair Garrett of the House Committee on Higher Education,  
 Vice Chair Amato of the House Committee on Higher Education,  
 and members of the House Committee on Higher Education,**

**House Bill 2139 HD1**

**Friday, February 13, 2026 – 2:00PM**

**House Conference Room 309**

**Aloha, my name is Angelina Bezhenar and I am testifying in support of HB2139 HD1, which will appropriate funds to the University of Hawai'i to conduct a study on effective treatment methods to reduce populations of the Queensland Longhorn Beetle.**

**As the Queensland Longhorn Beetles, also known as *acalolepta aesthetica*, continue to be found in different areas across the Hawaiian Islands, their threat against local plant species continues to rise. These wood-boring insects have been discovered consuming crops such as avocado, 'ulu, cacao, and citrus. During its larval stage, it bores deep into tree trunks of its host, causing internal damage by feeding, which poses a significant risk to the tree that may even lead to plant death. If left unmanaged, the continued spread of this invasive beetle threatens not only farmers and local food systems, but also broader ecosystem health. Research has shown that invasive wood-boring insects can accelerate forest decline, reduce biodiversity, and undermine land stewardship efforts. Intervention through research-based management strategies is critical to preventing widespread and irreversible damage further from its current state.**

**By appropriating funds towards a study on effective treatment of invasive Queensland Longhorn Beetles, it is possible to reduce their populations, which is why I am in support of HB2139 HD1.**

**Thank you for your consideration,**

**Angelina Bezhenar**

**Senate District 4**

**House District 6**