

ACT 102

H.B. NO. 2675

A Bill for an Act Relating to Rapid Ohia Death.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Hawaii:

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the ohia is Hawaii's most common and widespread native tree. Ohia trees can be found at sea level and up to elevations of twenty-five hundred meters. The trees provide critical habitats for rare and endangered native birds and insects.

In recent years, the disease known as rapid ohia death, caused by the non-native fungal pathogen *Ceratocystis fimbriata*, has been killing ohia trees in the forests and residential areas of Puna and Hilo on the island of Hawaii. When infected, the crown of an ohia tree first turns yellow, and then brown within a few days or weeks. The fungal pathogen progresses up the stem of the tree and manifests as a dark staining in the sapwood along the outer margin of the trunk. Landowners have noticed that when healthy-looking trees begin exhibiting symptoms, the trees die in a matter of weeks.

As of 2014, approximately fifteen thousand acres on the island of Hawaii have shown greater than fifty per cent mortality from rapid ohia death. Recent estimates have found that the disease has affected thirty thousand acres on the island of Hawaii.

The exact transmittal methods of *Ceratocystis fimbriata* have not yet been determined. However, researchers believe that the fungus can be transmitted by feral animals, insects, soil, water, infected cuttings, unsanitized pruning tools, and muddy vehicles. There is no treatment that can protect ohia trees from rapid ohia death, and there is no cure for infected trees.

The legislature finds that rapid ohia death has the potential to destroy ohia trees statewide. The loss of ohia trees would be catastrophic to the diversity, structure, and function of the State's remaining native forests.

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Researchers of the United States Department of Agriculture, the University of Hawaii, and other organizations have made progress in combating rapid ohia death, including isolating the fungal pathogen, researching alternative hosts for the pathogen, eliminating other causes for the ohia tree deaths, and making recommendations on preventing the spread of the disease. However, the researchers require additional funding to continue their work.

The purpose of this Act is to appropriate funds to combat rapid ohia death. The funding will help to continue pathology research by the Agricultural Research Service of the United States Department of Agriculture and other organizations.

SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$300,000 or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2016-2017 for rapid ohia death research, including the employment of pathology post-doctoral fellows, technical support for pathology research, materials and supplies for pathogen and molecular detection, and a new growth chamber for pathology experiments.

The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of agriculture for the purposes of this Act.

SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2016.

(Approved June 21, 2016.)