



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Written Testimony Presented Before the
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HCR 47 – REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE TO CONVENE A TASK FORCE TO DOCUMENT AND COLLECT DATA IDENTIFYING ECONOMIC, ENVIRONMENTAL, AND REGULATORY CONSEQUENCES OF CROP DEGRADATION CAUSED BY INVASIVE AND ENDANGERED SPECIES IN HAWAII.

Chair Tsuji, Vice Chair Onishi, and members of the House Committee on Agriculture, thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on HCR 47, which requests the Department of Agriculture to convene a task force to document and collect data identifying economic, environmental, and regulatory consequences of crop degradation caused by invasive and endangered species in Hawai'i.

Although we appreciate that the intent of HCR 47 is to obtain a complete and comprehensive review, evaluation, and recommendations for management of all impacts of all invasive and endangered species with respect to agricultural crops, urban horticulture, and natural resources affecting rural or urban horticulture in Hawai'i, this is an enormous task. Thus, we must express strong reservations about the practicality of implementing HCR 47, which appropriates no funding for this daunting task, and asks that it be accomplished within a six month time frame.

Hawai'i is an island, and virtually all of the pests, plant diseases, and weeds impacting agricultural and other resources in the state are invasive species. Moreover, this is a moving target – a recent survey by the Department of Agriculture found that an average of 24 new insects are introduced to Hawai'i each year.

Hawai'i is also commonly referred to as “the endangered species capital of the world.” Given that endangered species are by definition rare and in danger of extinction, it is doubtful that many of these negatively affect crops, except to limit agricultural practices where conservation is deemed necessary. However, evaluation of all possible scenarios and impacts is a challenging task.

Testimony provided by the University of Hawai'i this session on HB 1040 (Relating to Invasive Species) stressed the great difficulty of evaluating the economic impact of multiple invasive species, and advised that a more practical approach is to focus on a single invasive pest. Such studies generally take from one to three years, depending upon the information available, as was the case with the recently completed economic evaluation of little fire ant in Hawai'i.

HCR 47 rightly points out the need for a coordinated approach to both mitigation of invasive species, and evaluation of the relationship of endangered species to agriculture and natural resources in Hawai'i. However, with no funds provided and a very short time frame, we do not believe that the approach described in HCR 47 is practical to implement, nor is likely to result in production of the information requested.

For the reasons stated above, while we appreciate the intent, we must express strong reservations about passage of HCR 47.