



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 Finance
Thursday, February 23, 2023 at 11:30 a.m.

By

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And

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HB 1149 HD1 – RELATING TO THE COCONUT RHINOCEROS BEETLE PROGRAM

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the House Committee on Finance:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 1149 HD1 relating to *Oryctes rhinoceros* or coconut rhinoceros beetle (CRB) which adversely impacts palm species that are important to the State's agricultural economy, cultural heritage, and ecosystems.

CRBs feed on emerging palm fronds that cause damage and often severe enough to cause die back and plant mortality. There exists a CRB response program which is a coordinated partnership with the University of Hawai'i, U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Hawai'i Department of Agriculture, and other key organizations.

Since the detection of CRB on O'ahu, funding for CRB response has primarily been through federal partners such as USDA and the U. S. Navy. The purpose of this measure is to appropriate \$720,000 or so much thereof out of the general revenues of the State of Hawai'i to support existing CRB response positions and core activities involving research, response, education, and investigative work needed to maintain a successful and effective program to control the spread of CRB.

Specifically, this bill will provide funding for:

- one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) permanent junior researcher to serve as the deputy incident commander under HDOA leadership;
- one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) permanent administrative professional/technician for program administration and maintenance;
- one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) permanent data collection, management, and GIS analysis supervisor;
- three full-time equivalent (3.0 FTE) permanent data technicians;

- two full-time equivalent (2.0 FTE) permanent outreach and education specialists;
- one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) permanent canine supervisor for the CRB response canine program;
- two full-time equivalent (2.0 FTE) permanent canine handlers for the CRB response canine program;
- administration and other related costs for the CRB response canine program, including kenneling and veterinary support; and,
- supplies for maintaining research colonies and potential biological control agents.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 1149 HD1, provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in our Board of Regents approved budget.