



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
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By

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And

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HB 643 – RELATED TO THE COCONUT RHINOCEROS BEETLE PROGRAM

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of the intent of HB 643 relating to the Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle (CRB) Program which establishes short-term management initiatives for a CRB response with appropriations for activities and positions.

We support the intent of this bill and offer the following comments. The landscape-altering impact of CRB is being realized across many neighborhoods on O'ahu and Kaua'i. As populations build on these islands, there is an increased threat of spread to Lāna'i, Moloka'i, and Ni'ihau, as well as reintroductions to Maui and Hawai'i Island. The Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle Response (CRBHawaii.org), a federally-funded emergency response program based in the University of Hawai'i Mānoa College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience (UHM-CTAHR), has been working to suppress and eradicate CRB subpopulations since 2014. The status of future federal funding to support this program is unclear and the current Cooperative Agreements with the U.S. Department of Agriculture for canine detection and operational response terminate in June and August 2025, respectively.

UHM-CTAHR views this bill as an important effort to develop State support for the CRB Response program. One amendment/clarification is suggested for Section 3 (5), which allocates unspecified funds for subsidizing fumigation. The use of the only fumigant, sulfuryl fluoride, has very recently been discontinued pending further evaluation. There are no current alternatives for fumigation of high-risk materials traveling between islands. Researchers at UHM-CTAHR are collaborating with the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture (HDOA) and a local pest control company to evaluate an alternative fumigant in February 2025. UHM-CTAHR can only support Section 3 (5) when an effective fumigant is approved by the HDOA Plant Quarantine Branch.

We support the intent of HB 643 provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in our BOR Approved Budget. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.