



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

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SB 2713 – RELATING TO BIOSECURITY

Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Ruderman, and members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in strong support of SB 2713 relating to invasive species.

According to the Hawai'i Invasive Species Council, invasive species bring diseases, cause predation on native species, out-compete native species, alter habitat, and hybridize with native species. Hawai'i has some of the highest number of invasive species in the U.S.; and given that tourism is an important economic base for Hawai'i, invasive species have the potential to produce devastating effects on the state and its economy. Biosecurity, which includes invasive species control, is the major challenge that faces Hawai'i agriculture. The potential economic effect in agricultural and non-agricultural settings is estimated to be in the billions of dollars.

According to the U.S. Geological Survey, the competent way to address invasive species is called Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR). By definition this is “a coordinated set of actions to find and eradicate potential invasive species in a specific location before they spread and cause harm”. An example of this can be seen with the past and recent history of little fire ants. They are well established on Hawai'i Island, but not yet on other islands, although they are invading other islands. Upon detection, Hawai'i Department of Agriculture engages in rapid response. To date, these actions have been able to maintain a level of control to where little fire ants are not yet established.

A rapid response to invasive species is also consistent with the best management practice known as Integrated Pest Management (IPM). According to the Environmental Protection Agency, IPM “is an effective and environmentally sensitive approach to pest management...that can be applied to both agricultural and non-agricultural settings”. Its components are: (1) Set an Action Threshold, (2) Monitor and Identify Pests, (3)

Prevention, and (4) Control. It is not always possible to completely eradicate an invasive species, therefore one sets a threshold below which one attempts to maintain the population. For the Control component of IPM, the less risky control measures are attempted first. If the level of success does not decrease the problem below the action threshold, then additional control measures are applied. Combining concepts of EDRR and IPM define a short and long-term strategy that can maintain and improve Hawai'i's ecosystems and economy.

The Hawai'i legislature via SB 2713 is using concepts of EDRR by defining a rapid response trust fund for this approach to invasive species control. This bill is well-conceived and has a mechanism for funding. At the same time, it must be understood that the legislature cannot tie the hands of state agencies to apply concepts of EDRR and IPM by excessively limiting the tools that are necessary to combat invasive species. For example, bills that target the use of pesticides MUST be seriously considered as to their effects on invasive species control. They must be based on the best known, and accepted, science, rather than on the desire of activist groups and pseudo-science. Without seriously considering companion legislation, a rapid response bill will not accomplish its goal.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of SB 2713; and look forward to it becoming law and protecting our native ecosystems, our people and our economy.