



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Water and Land
and

Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment
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HB 1548 HD1 – RELATING TO RAPID OHIA DEATH

Chairs Kahele and Gabbard, Vice Chairs Keith-Agaran and Ruderman, and members of the Senate Committee on Water and Land and Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on HB 1548 HD1 relating to rapid ohia death (ROD). The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM), College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR) supports the intent of this bill. ROD is a disease that is changing the natural landscape of Hawai'i on state and private lands. ROD is the greatest threat to our native forests, watersheds, and the endangered species that live there. Widespread ohia mortality would also be a severe loss for native Hawaiian culture.

A team of scientists from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agriculture Research Service, Pacific Basin Agricultural Research Center in collaboration with UH have:

- discovered the two new species of fungus that are attacking the ohia;
- developed molecular diagnostic tools to enable certain identification of the fungus;
- identified how the pathogen moves, both by human and natural means, in particular by boring beetles;
- shown that wounding of ohia trees allows them to become infected; and,
- UH Hilo has developed the drone methodology for detecting trees with ROD symptoms from the air.

The news that the fungus has reached Kaua'i demonstrates that this is a statewide problem, not just a Hawai'i Island problem. A recent detection of a virulent pathogen of ROD, *Ceratocystis lukuohia* indicates that there might be more ROD infected trees or the spread of disease would be rapid on Kaua'i. This bill addresses the state-wide need through research, prevention and outreach.

CTAHR strongly supports the effort expressed by this bill and is willing to assist in the mentioned outreach through the Hawai'i Cooperative Extension Service and the CTAHR Office of Communications.

CTAHR extension agents, while distributed throughout the state, all have a level of state-wide responsibilities to extend information to the community through a variety of educational platforms, including but not limited to, workshops, social media, print media, and video.

Since people are one of the major vectors, UHM/CTAHR, Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR), and others have been conducting an extension program that has:

- given hundreds of community talks and events, reaching tens of thousands of local people;
- produced and distributed tens of thousands of brochures, produced radio public service announcements, websites, and social media that have reached hundreds of thousands of people;
- produced a half hour documentary film on ROD; and,
- shown that almost half of everyone in Hawai'i is aware of ROD, with 90% awareness on Hawai'i Island (this survey was done before the Kaua'i outbreak)

CTAHR supports DLNR in the battle against ROD and is willing to assist where we can.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 1548 HD1. However, we defer to the testimony of DLNR as to the feasibility of this bill relative to their manpower and proposed funding to accomplish the task.