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February 25, 2019

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice-Chair
Committee on Ways and Means

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and Committee Members:

RE: SB 871 Relating to Invasive Species

In the past two years, the Council of Mayors has identified invasive species as a top priority that deserved everyone's attention. Our best efforts at the county level are often inadequate to protect our islands from harmful pests, and limited resources make it imperative that the State, counties, Feds, and private sector work together in pursuing solutions to what often seem intractable problems. This Legislature has really stood up, and hopefully will do even more this year.

With the possible exception (so far) of the parakeet problem, it seems that Hawai'i County has suffered a disproportionate share of the damage caused by invasive species, including rapid ohia death, little fire ants, coqui frogs, coffee berry borer, and probably others. But all our islands, and all our constituents, are at risk. My primary request to you would be "Please don't give up." As a county, we do not have the resources or expertise to fight these devastating invaders on our own. We need as much assistance from the State as you can offer.

While I would defer to others as to how precious dollars should be allocated, I strongly endorse the investment of funds in combatting invasives, and therefore urge passage of SB 871 in some form. Please provide as much money as you can manage, broaden the initiative if you think it appropriate, include positions and funding in the Senate version of the State budget, and let's move forward.

Respectfully Submitted,

Harry Kim
MAYOR