

## EACP Committee

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**From:** Jason Economou <jason@ramauai.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 25, 2019 5:14 PM  
**To:** EACP Committee  
**Subject:** Written Testimony for Environmental, Agricultural, and Cultural Preservation Committee  
**Attachments:** GAD Testimony Regarding MISC 2.26.19.docx

Aloha,

I have attached written testimony on behalf of the REALTORS Association of Maui that I would like to be considered by the committee. I will plan on attending the committee meeting to provide oral testimony as well.

Mahalo,  
Jason

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**Jason A. Economou**  
Government Affairs Director  
Realtors Association of Maui

441 Ala Makani Place  
Kahului, HI 96732

Office: (808) 495-4180



**Jason A. Economou**  
Government Affairs Director

441 Ala Makani Pl • Kahului, HI 96732  
phone 808-243-8585 • fax 808-873-8585  
jason@ramauai.com • www.ramaui.com

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February 26, 2019

**Councilmember Shane Sinenci, Chair**

Environmental, Agricultural, and Cultural Preservation Committee  
200 South High Street, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Wailuku, Hawaii 96793

**RE: Testimony Regarding Maui Invasive Species Committee and Moloka'i/Maui  
Invasive Species Committee**

Aloha Chair Sinenci, Vice-Chair Kama, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jason Economou, and I am testifying on behalf of the REALTORS Association of Maui and its more than 1,600 licensed, professional REALTORS regarding the Maui Invasive Species Committee. The REALTORS Association of Maui recognizes that MISC is making great strides in containing and eradicating many of the invasive species they are tasked with addressing. However, we fear that their efforts are meaningless without the support of the people of Maui, and more importantly, the elected leaders of Maui County. I encourage the County Council to continue empowering MISC moving forward.

All of the invasive species MISC is addressing are potentially devastating to Maui if gone unchecked, but the REALTORS Association of Maui is particularly concerned with coqui frogs and fire ants, and we believe this council should be particularly concerned with them as well. A 2006 study examining the economic impact of coqui frogs on the Big Island, which was conducted by Gettysburg College and UH Manoa, showed a decline in property values within only 500 meters of coqui frogs. The study looked at over 46,000 property transactions between 1995 and 2005, and determined there was an annual loss of \$1.3 million to the Hawaii County housing market. The study also concluded that coqui frogs would have a similar, if not much harsher, impact on the Maui market.

Similarly, a study published in the journal *Ecological Economics* in 2015 examined the impact of little fire ants on Hawaii Island. That study estimated residential damages in the amount of \$1,000 per property, and lodging damages as high as \$183,000 per property. The study also found agricultural damages in an amount of \$600 per farm, and nursery damages at \$9,000 per farm, and estimated park damages at \$2,300 per acre. This study concluded with a recommendation to increase current funding going toward managing infestations, as the costs only increase over time if little fire ants are not properly addressed.

Clearly, these pests pose a significant threat to Maui's economy. However, aside from the economic impact, both coqui frogs and fire ants have a devastating impact to quality of life. RAM's members are overwhelmingly residents of Maui, and as residents, we implore you to provide MISC with whatever support it needs to rid this island of coqui frogs and fire ants.

Mahalo,  
Jason A. Economou