

## United States Senate

February 20, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue  
Secretary  
United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)  
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

I am writing to request your intervention on the avocado lace bug (*Pseudacysta perseae*), which has recently been discovered on O'ahu, Maui, and Hawai'i Island. This pest is a direct threat to Hawai'i's avocado crop, valued at roughly \$1.6 million in 2019 by the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture. USDA's help will also give other Hawai'i farmers better confidence that when invasive pests emerge in the future, USDA will be there. Finally, solving Hawai'i's avocado lace beetle problem helps mainland growers by reducing the chance of having the beetle spread, and by testing control techniques.

To provide immediate assistance, I request help from the Farm Service Agency to proactively contact Hawai'i's avocado growers and help them apply for any available aid for farmers who have lost crops. I also request the assistance of the Pacific Basin Agricultural Research Center (PBARC) to develop effective controls to help Hawai'i's farmers to save their avocado trees.

This is the third time I have written to you about invasive pests that threaten Hawai'i's agricultural production. Together, the Queensland longhorn beetle (*Acalolepta aesthetica*), the two-lined spittlebug (*Prosapia bicincta*), and the avocado lace beetle (*Pseudacysta perseae*), show the continuous pressure Hawai'i's farmers and ranchers face from invasive pests. To provide Hawai'i agriculture the assistance it needs, federal scientists must work together in partnership with the State of Hawai'i and the University of Hawai'i.

I reiterate my request to meet with you to discuss how we can better integrate the efforts of your Department's outstanding scientists at PBARC and the Institute of Pacific Island Forestry with those at the University of Hawai'i and the U.S. Geological Survey's Pacific Island Ecosystem Research Center. While I understand and appreciate the informal

collaboration of these institutions on the ground, I believe the time has come to consider a more formal arrangement, with additional resources to provide the support Hawai'i needs against invasive pests.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Brian Schatz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "S" at the end.

BRIAN SCHATZ  
United States Senator