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TESTIMONY OF IN STRONG SUPPORT OF SB2585

**BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS
FEBRUARY 12, 2008, ROOM 224, AT 2:45PM, THE STATE CAPITOL**

Aloha Chairperson Tokuda and Members of the Committee!

As a beekeeper and member of the boards of Hawaii Beekeepers Assoc and the Hawaiian Honey Bee Coop. I wish to testify in strong support of SB2585 that establishes Country of Origin Labeling requirements for any honey sold in the state of Hawai'i under HRS Chapter 147.

Our bill is modeled on the state of Florida's bill that has been in effect, without legal challenges, since 1979. SB2585 would require clear country of origin labeling of all honey and part-honey sweeteners that are sold in the state of Hawai'i. This is a fair trade equity issue. We are the victims of blatantly illegal and unfair trade practices by foreign and domestic importers, packers, and distributors of adulterated, contaminated and mislabeled honey. Low prices have discouraged many of our beekeepers and now, with the discovery of the blood sucking *Varroa* mites on our bees here, our costs are escalating rapidly.

On the mainland over the past several years there has been a major decline in the number of beekeeping businesses, in the number of colonies producing honey, and in the number of colonies available for pollination of food, fiber, fodder and fuel crops. As pure US produced honey becomes scarce the prices increase. As a result, to offset the decrease in domestic honey massive amounts of honey, and "honey-like" products are being imported from China, Argentina, Viet Nam and other countries, and often "dumped" in our markets mislabeled as products of the USA. This has the effect of depressing market prices for local honeys and forcing beekeepers to abandon the business. The decline in the number of US beekeepers has caused crises in pollination of some high value crops on the mainland.

The potential severe consequences of a decline in the apiculture enterprise in the state of Hawai'i are not widely appreciated as yet, but there can be no doubt that it would pose a serious challenge to our food security and further reduce our food production self-sufficiency of pollinator dependant crops such as cucumbers, melons, squash, citrus fruits, coffee, macadamia nuts, mango, guava, avocado, lychee, longan, and many specialty fruits and vegetables that require honey bees to optimize their yields. If we loose our beekeepers what will we do here in Hawai'i when *Varroa* have killed off all of the feral honey bee colonies and crop yields drop to below economically viable levels?

As I testified earlier, our industry's larger goal is to cooperate in achieving the urgent goals of moving toward improving our food self-sufficiency, protecting our food security and developing our food production sustainability.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Darlene Tsukazaki

From: Sen. Jill Tokuda
Sent: Wednesday, February 13, 2008 8:54 AM
To: Kamakana Kaimuloa; Darlene Tsukazaki
Subject: FW: SB 2584 and SB 2585

LATELate testimony

From: misha@oldhawaiiancoffee.com [mailto:misha@oldhawaiiancoffee.com]
Sent: Tuesday, February 12, 2008 10:16 PM
To: Sen. Jill Tokuda
Subject: SB 2584 and SB 2585

Aloha Senator Tokuda, We need to protect our unique and pure crops from Hawaii such as Coffee and Honey. I am a coffee farmer in South Kona with Old Hawaiian Coffee and on the Board of Directors of the Hawaii Beekeepers Association. The blatant deception in the mainland and in Hawaii on food labeling is unbelievable. We have unique and pure products here---- yet the big companies can "water down" the products. Look at coffee. A Kona coffee blend in Hawaii only requires the seller to have at least 10% Kona Coffee in a bag to call it a "Blend" but they do not even have to say where the other 90% comes from. All that is required in the USFDA is that "a portion of the contents come from the growing region". Watered down honey is also a major problem. Just a drop of honey from Hawaii in a jar is sufficient to call it a "Hawaii" honey. Ridiculous!!!! That is NOT fair for the bee keepers and it is definitely not fair for the consumers. Being a farmer is not easy.

THE FARMER AND BEEKEEPER are at the dirty end of the stick and all the big companies can walk over you especially if the STATE government is in the hands of the moneyed Corporate wealthy.

As farmers and beekeepers we try to Malama Ka AINA, not destroy the important agricultural uniqueness and PRODUCTS of Hawaii. If the State of Hawaii allows watered down products, coffee, and honey into the Islands we are hurting the hard working farmers. Help protect us and protect the consumer. BE HONEST and be TRUTHFUL. REAL and accurate TRUTH in labeling is important!!! Pass these bills and make Hawaii a STATE PROUD of our Fair and Honest labeling of food products. Mahalo nui. Misha Sperka-Old Hawaiian Coffee (owner) and Hawaii Beekeepers Association (BODirectors)