

testimony

From: Shanti Devi [sdevi@hawaii.edu]
Sent: Tuesday, February 26, 2008 7:32 AM
To: testimony
Subject: oppose blends being sold as Kona Coffee

Testimony of [Shanti Devi]

IN OPPOSITION to SB2905-- (Relating to a Study of Regulations of Kona Coffee Blends)

Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Date: February 26, 2008
Time: 10:45 am
Place: Conference Room 211

Chairperson Barker, Vice Chairperson Tsutsui, and members of the Committee:

My name is Shanti Devi; I am a coffee farmer on the Big Island and am a member of the Kona Coffee Farmers Association ("KCFA") and provide this testimony with respect to my coffee farming business, [NAME OF YOUR FARM].

I offer this testimony in OPPOSITION to SB2905.

I am in opposition to the Bill because I believe it is being used to avoid dealing with on-going Consumer Fraud--and more specifically to avoid consideration of the SB661 (Truth-in-Labeling for Kona Coffee) which is pending in the Committee on Agriculture and Hawaiian Affairs.

Last year the Legislature made a factual determination that: "existing labeling requirements for Kona coffee causes CONSUMER FRAUD and CONFUSION and DEGRADES the 'Kona coffee' name." (SCR102/SD1/HD1). The legislature needs to address this "consumer fraud" without further delay.

I respectfully request that this Committee consider the written testimony presented to the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Hawaiian Affairs on February 5, 2008, by Hawaii County Council Legislative Liaison Ralph Boyea, by the KCFA and by 13 Kona coffee farmers--all requesting immediate legislative action to put a stop to CONSUMER FRAUD--without the delay of a "study" sought by the corporate coffee blenders.

I respectfully request that this Committee consider that statements of Senator Clayton Hee made in opposition to SB2905 at the February 5 Hearing: This is not a complicated issue. Don't waste money on a study. No "study" is needed. Fix the fraud. Require truth-in-labeling and let the market work it out. Address the issue now. Don't delay. Protect the name of the farmers' crop.

The implication of proceeding with a study of the "economic impacts" of ending fraud is that the Legislature intends to let CONSUMER FRAUD continue if there are adverse economic

impacts on the corporate coffee blenders. I believe that is an indefensible position for the Legislature to take.

KCEA respectfully requests that this committee amend SB2905 to incorporate the Truth-in-Labeling provisions of SB661 and to change the purpose of the study to "How can the Hawaii Department of Agriculture effectively promote the marketing of Kona coffee and of other Hawaiian-grown coffees in a manner compatible with consumer protection and fair marketing principles."

The Legislature has recognized that it is inherently deceptive to permit the use of the "Kona" name for 90% foreign-grown coffee. The Legislature should now act to end this deception and fraud.