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WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF SANDRA LEE KUNIMOTO  
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH  
FRIDAY, JANUARY 22, 2010  
11:00 A.M.  
ROOM 329

SENATE BILL NO. 1265, SD1  
RELATING TO LABELING OF MEAT AND FISH PRODUCTS

Chairperson Yamane and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill No. 1265, SD1 relating to the treatment of pre-packaged meat with gas or other technology to enhance its color only. The Department of Agriculture supports the intent and offers comments. We defer to the Department of Health as to their ability and authority to enforce this bill if passed into law.

We offer the following change to the SD1:

"SECTION 4. The department of agriculture shall display on the department's official website notice of the labeling requirements for gas-treated meat or meat products, meat or meat products derived from exotic animals, and fish products required by sections 1 and 2. The notice required by this Act shall be continuously available to producers, packagers, distributors, retailers, consumers of meat and fish, and the general public through the department of agriculture's website beginning on August 1, ~~2009~~ 2010. The website shall also provide a link to the Hawaii Revised Statutes in order that the Act in its entirety can be viewed. "



# HAWAII TEAMSTERS AND ALLIED WORKERS, LOCAL 996

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Rep. Ryan Yamane, Chair  
Rep. Scott Nishimoto, Vice-Chair  
Committee on Health

Glenn Ida, Representative  
Friday, Jan. 22, 2010, at 11 AM  
Conference room 329

The Hawaii Teamsters Local 996 strongly supports SB1265, SD 1, Relating to the Labeling of Meat and Fish Products.

Currently packages of meat that are treated with gas technology applied to them are not required to list it on the label. These packages of gassed meat are placed in the same area of the meat case alongside the fresh meat cut and packaged within the store premises.

Gas technology does nothing to maintain the sanitation or freshness of the meat product. Gas technology only maintains the color of the meat which can extend the expiration date by up to five days depending on the cut of meat. This practice can be misleading because the consumer can only base their buying decision on appearance and the expiration date. Compare that to the purchasing of fresh fruit which can be directly handled, inspected from all sides and even sniffed for freshness.

SB 1265, SD 1, will require that gassed meat packages be appropriately labeled to advise the consumer what has been added the meat package during processing similar to the labeling of fish products containing Carbon Monoxide Gas.

The Hawaii Teamsters Local 996 strongly supports SB1265, SD1, Relating to the Labeling of Meat and Fish Products.

Thank you for the allowing me to testify on this important matter.



Date: 1/22/2010

Time 11:00 AM

Place: RM 329

To: Committee on Health  
Rep. Ryan I. Yamane, Chair  
Rep. Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair

From: Hawaii Food Industry Association  
Dick Botti, President and Lauren Zirbel, Government Relations

Re: SB 1265, SD1 RELATING TO LABELING OF MEAT AND FISH PRODUCTS.

HFIA objects to this measure. These labeling requirements are not universal across the United States; thus, meat and fish products which are imported must be labeled once they arrive at the grocery store. This would require a significant investment in labor to accomplish. Grocers are already overwhelmed and burdened by a multitude of government labeling requirements. This bill will cost time and money that the food industry does not have during this economic recession.

This bill amends HRS Chapter 328 by introducing new language that labeling be required for fish products that have been gas-treated to enhance the product's color. HFIA believes this to be unnecessary as HRS Section 328-10 and Chapter 11-19, Hawaii Administrative Rules (HAR), already address the issue of proper labeling of products treated with chemical preservatives.

Carbon monoxide is often used in modified atmosphere packaging (MAP) to maintain food quality by altering the atmospheric conditions within the package; replacing air with inert gasses and then heat sealing products. This low-oxygen packaging system extends the shelf-life of meat and other perishable foods by up to 15 days, but also keeps meat looking fresh even when it isn't. Labeling MAP packaged foods is unnecessary because these products are regarded as safe by the FDA and MAP packaged foods have a clearly labeled expiration date posted on all fresh meat and fish products. These products are not a danger to the consumer yet by forcing mandatory labeling of MAP products the State is implying to the consumer that they are.

This is an unnecessary and costly measure.

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