

LATE TESTIMONY

March 3, 2011

Aloha,

I am in support of HB 1598.

As a member of the Hawaii Cacao Task Force I advised the task force that a festival to educate and inform the public about the crop should be established to support this emerging industry. I along with other industry leaders made this a reality last Saturday, February 26 at the first ever Hawai'i Chocolate Festival held at Dole Cannery Shops. It was a success with over 1,000 people attending.

There were cacao plants for sales, educational classes and demonstration, chocolate tasting, a consumer and industry trade show, chocolate product sales, entertainment and lots of information and sharing in support of this emerging industry.

As a professional event planner for such events as the Made in Hawaii Festival a benefit for the Hawaii Food Industry Association, Hawaii Book and Music Festival a benefit for Hawaii Literacy, Kailua Town Party a benefit for the Lani-Kailua Outdoor Circle and the Hale Aina Ohana Golf Tournament a benefit for Hawaii's Culinary Industry I recognize the necessity and benefits of such events to showcase an industry as well as educate the public.

I am hopeful that you will consider inserting the including of a declaration to identify the month of February as Hawaiian Grown Cacao Month in perpetuity into House Bill 1598. This will assist in providing a designated time frame to highlight how Hawaiian cacao and provide a focus on Hawaiian chocolate that will aid in promoting tourism, create jobs locally, supporting a sustainable crop to boost local economy and exports from Hawaii.

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LATE TESTIMONY

March 1, 2011

To: The Honorable Representative Marcus R. Oshiro, Chair
The Honorable Representative Marilyn B. Lee, Vice Chair
Committee on Finance

From: Corinne W. L. Ching

Subject: House Bill 1598 HD1 - Relating to the Cacao Industry

I submit testimony in **strong support** of House Bill 1598 HD1 - Relating to the Cacao Industry.

Cacao holds a special place in history. *Theobroma cacao*, otherwise known as chocolate and translated into English as the "Food of the Gods", was introduced to the Hawaiian Islands in 1850. Cacao has been used for centuries as a medicine and cacao has high concentrations of theobromine, a purine alkaloid that has both a calming effect on the brain and an energizing effect on the nervous system. It has also been found to stimulate the appetite and to reduce fatigue.

Each year, the chocolate industry produces \$75 billion worldwide. Hawaii's environment and climate position it as the only state in the United States that can commercially grow cacao. Hawaii is ideally in close proximity to both Asia and mainland US, located to capture and prosper from the opportunities from a growing cacao market. Asia has already developed into a major chocolate market and Japan has experienced a significant increase in chocolate consumption during the past decade.

Today, the cacao industry is poised to heighten the state's economy with a broad range of job opportunities and increased revenue from diversified agriculture, production and processing, in addition to research and development with the potential to attract federal funds. Cacao possesses a propitious opportunity to develop a new industry in the growing, cultivating, processing, and shipping of Hawaii-grown cacao to the mainland United States and the rest of the world. Additionally, cacao holds the promise of helping the state diversify away from pineapple and sugar cane, markets that have eroded in recent years.

I would like to also suggest that the language from HB 1589 Designating February as Hawaiian Grown Cacao Month be inserted into the bill bringing further recognition to the industry and thereby promoting and encouraging local agriculture.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 1598 HD1.