



State of Hawaii
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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TESTIMONY OF RUSSELL KOKUBUN
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
January 27, 2011
8:30 A.M.

HOUSE BILL NO. 1787
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

Chairperson Tsuji and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 1787. This bill proposes to exempt producers of agricultural products with a focus on honey in areas without access to municipal water for processing the product in a certified food-processing establishment or from obtaining a permit from the Department of Health (DOH).

The Hawai'i Department of Agriculture has concerns regarding portions of HB 1787. Regarding Section 2, §321, which pertains to an exception to agricultural producers without access to municipal water, the currently proposed language is too general and may create a food safety risk for any agricultural product, not just honey. Raw unprocessed honey has an extremely low risk for impacts on human health; the only caveat being that it should not be fed to infants less than one year of age to prevent a rare but serious form of food poisoning. In general, honey does not present a



food safety issue unless it is adulterated, i.e., sugar water is added to the honey. The Department would like to point out that a process is available through the DOH's Safe Drinking Water Branch that allows producers without access to municipal water to operate appropriately permitted facilities.

In regards to Section 3, §328-79, the Department of Agriculture would like to request that with this increase in volume, honey producers receive appropriate training as specified by the Department of Health. We support that appropriate and clear labeling is maintained as outlined and that the Department of Health has the right to inspect the honey producer. This proposed amendment also specifies that honey producers affected may only sell to consumers or retail stores on the same island; the Department suggests removing this limitation to increase available markets.

Finally, this bill emphasizes the Department's belief that clear honey standards need to be created. Hawai'i is one of only a few states that does not have such standards. Adulteration of honey is the addition of additives such as corn syrup, water, starch, chalk, and gelatin; this is generally done to reduce production costs. Diluting honey in any way dramatically increases the risks honey may pose to human health. While we support the intent of this bill, we would like to see the language of this bill modified to reflect the above concerns and those identified by the Hawai'i Department of Health.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.