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Statement of
Tom Menezes
Owner
Hawaiian Crown Plantation & Chocolate Factory
Testimony before the **Committee on Ways and Means**
Friday, March 31, 2017 at 9:30 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 211

In support of **HB1327: RELATING TO THE HIGH TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION.**

Aloha Chair Jill Tokuda, Vice Chair Donovan Dela Cruz, and Members of the Committee on Ways and Means:

Hawaiian Crown Plantation & Chocolate Factory (HCP) **supports** HB1327 that makes an appropriation for the continuation of the manufacturing grant program within the High Technology Development Corporation. We will greatly benefit from this MAP grant as we invest in more equipment to expand our chocolate production, which in turn helps us process more quality chocolate for our fellow farmers.

HPC is a proud grower and processor of 200%, Hawaiian-sourced, tree to bar chocolate. We say 200% because first we planted the trees in Hilo, so that we can produce the cacao pods, harvest the beans, ferment and dry them to create amazing, uniquely Hawaiian flavors. Second we take those beans, process and melt the nibs within to temper a truly Hawaiian chocolate bar. We have a farm near Hilo with six (6) farm workers, and about 40 acres of cacao intercropped with apple banana. We have a shop in Hilo with four (4) employees that produces a wide range of chocolates and inclusions, smoothies and acai bowls. We partner with a number of neighbors who farm cacao from Kona, Puna and Hamakua. You can find our chocolate bars at both Whole Foods Markets on Oahu and Maui.

I planted our cacao trees more than 15 years ago, and opened a café and shop to make chocolate 2.5 years ago. My business partners and I invested our own money to get started, and we have weathered many ups and downs. This year our marketing efforts have lead to a great increase in chocolate demand by tourists and locals. As a result we must invest in a larger capacity bean roaster, stone melanger, tempering machine, melting machine and a food processor to make product to meet demand from tourists and retailers.

This equipment investment amounts to about \$25,000, including taxes and shipping. The MAP Grant assistance may reimburse us close to \$5,000. We have many partner growers supplying us cacao for chocolate processing. We are excited about the ability to increase capacity to keep up with their production. We have a great opportunity to hire more staff and provide them highly skilled, machinery related job training.

According to the Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii, Hawaii has over 1,000 active manufacturers employing approximately 17,000 workers and Hawaii's manufacturing industry helped the local economy by exporting nearly \$570 million in manufactured goods in 2012.

We are a beneficiary of Hawaii's MAP program. We appreciate the State's support for local manufacturers like us, who are willing to make the commitment to grow our business in Hawaii. Thank you for listening.

Sincerely,

Tom Menezes
Owner
Hawaiian Crown Plantation & Chocolate Factory
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