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TESTIMONY ON HB283 HD1

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
Rep. Marcus R. Oshiro, Chair
Rep. Marilyn B. Lee, Vice Chair

Tuesday, February 28, 2012
11:00 A.M.
Conference Room 308

Appropriates \$140,000 for a program to control and eradicate the coffee borer beetle.

Aloha Chair Oshiro, Vice Chair Lee, and Members of the Committee:

Ka'u Farm Bureau strongly supports HB283 HD1.

The recent discovery of Coffee Berry Borer (CBB) in Kona threatens the entire Hawaiian coffee industry. Shortly after its discovery, a small number of Ka'u Farms have been identified as hosting the beetle. Ka'u is different than Kona in that our affected farms are more centralized and are not surrounded by feral coffee. Feral coffee acts as reservoir for the pest, mitigating the impacts of even the best management techniques. Ka'u's aggressive response to CBB may not be easily replicated on neighbor islands. Large farms both on Maui and Kauai utilize machine harvesting, making good sanitation practices very costly, if not impossible.

While the full tally is yet to be made, Kona has been experiencing losses on the magnitude of 20-40%. Moreover, large quantities of coffee have been downgraded due to insect damage, reducing the farm gate value of the remaining crop. CBB is a serious threat to Hawaii's agriculture industry and the state's economy. While CBB is battled worldwide, no other coffee growing origin shares Hawaii's high labor costs and restrictions on pesticides.

The industry's response has been immediate and multi-faceted. An ad-hoc CBB task force has been formed, including growers, processors, HDOA, UH, USDA and county government. Industry has committed \$50K toward the effort. Countless private dollars continue to be expended in the fight. Legislation that proposed a self-imposed 1 cent per pound fee on all coffee grown or imported to the state failed earlier this session. Federal grant applications are currently being developed.

This appropriation should be viewed as an investment one of the state's largest agricultural products and one that brings fame to Hawaii and helps drives tourism.

Please approve this measure.

Thank you!

Chris Manfredi
President