



## **The Hawaii Coffee Association Statement on HB 2298 CD1**

For many decades the Hawaii Coffee Industry has struggled to find unity in regards to the subject of coffee blending when calling out a Hawaii coffee origin name on the product label. The Hawaii Coffee Association and other Hawaii coffee associations and industry leaders have found that for such a volatile subject, would there be a way to find common ground?

For the past several legislative sessions, the effort to define and pass a better blending law seemed to naturally gravitate to that middle ground. This not only included those directly at the production level, but also the lawmakers who we needed to become educated on the subject. We got close, each time learning the small aspects of what it would take to get first, an understandable bill, and last, one that we could get passed.

Our first success was finding the unity within our ranks. The next was the more uncomfortable chapter of the issue that included the counterfeiting lawsuits. Lawmakers began to understand the need for action; that consumers were being cheated on their watch. More importantly, our industry needs to acknowledge that this movement is not about punishing anyone, since most of our customers and colleagues already play by the rules. The HCA represents every level of the industry, seed to cup as they say. Increasing the blend ratio better represents how and what we grow here in Hawaii, not how and what is grown somewhere else.

In 2022, the Legislature got historically close to passing a blending bill. While our intended bill did not achieve a preferred outcome, they did pass a directive to the Hawaii Department of Agriculture, Act 222, "The Economic Study on Changes in Coffee Labeling Law". This report highlights that increasing the minimum amount of Origin coffee (i.e. Kona, Maui, Ka'u) from 10% to 51% or higher would be advantageous to local farmers with the higher increase providing the most benefit.

House Bill 2298 was first drafted to incrementally increase this percentage to 100% by 2027. After several House and Senate Draft versions, the bill was sent to the Conference Committee resulting in Conference Draft 1 (CD 1). This is the final version that now sits on the Governor's desk. It basically states that as of July 1, 2027, any coffee labeled or advertised with a Hawaii geographic origin must consist of at least 51% coffee by weight from that geographic region. The measure aims to protect Hawaii's origin products that bear regional names and should contain at least a majority of that product from that region.

While the HCA feels congratulatory with this feeling of a great win, the work is not over. We need to believe in ourselves that we can and will continue to produce the best coffee and work top to bottom to support those who roast and sell our coffee, and that the entire industry will benefit.