



**Written Testimony
Brandon Bartolome
4th Generation President
Hilo Products, Inc.**

Aloha Chairperson, Board Members, and Staff of the Department of Land and Natural Resources,

My name is Brandon Bartolome, and I am the fourth-generation President of Hilo Products, Inc., a Hawai‘i Island-based company that has proudly serviced our local food industry for 88 years. Since our founding in 1938, Hilo Products has served as a critical bridge connecting Hawai‘i’s farmers to retailers, restaurants, schools, hospitals, and communities across this island.

Our company was built upon a simple but powerful philosophy established by my great-grandfather: buy everything our farmers grow. His belief was that sustaining local agriculture meant standing alongside farmers during both abundance and hardship. That principle continues to guide our operations today.

Supporting local agriculture is not always easy. There are times when we absorb financial losses to ensure that locally grown products continue moving through the food system. However, the impact of loss is far greater for our farmers—many of whom are now over the age of seventy and represent generations of agricultural knowledge that Hawai‘i cannot afford to lose. Maintaining viable market access for these farmers is essential to preserving Hawai‘i’s food security and agricultural future.

Beyond commercial operations, Hilo Products actively supports community food resilience efforts islandwide. We continue to partner with organizations such as the Hawai‘i Food Basket and Vibrant Hawai‘i, helping to box, distribute, and supply thousands of boxes of fresh fruits and vegetables to families in need. These efforts ensure that locally grown food reaches our communities while simultaneously supporting local producers.

Recognizing the increasing regulatory and operational challenges faced by small farms, we have also invested in education and outreach. My wife spearheads agricultural educational workshops designed to assist local farmers with implementing Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), food safety standards, and compliance measures necessary for them to remain competitive and operational in today's marketplace. These programs help farmers stay in business while strengthening Hawai'i's overall food safety infrastructure.

Our continued growth and ability to serve the island are currently constrained by operational space limitations. The proposed use of the Kanoelehua Industrial property will allow us to expand warehouse and operational capacity, improve logistics efficiency, enhance food safety handling, and better support locally grown agricultural products entering the marketplace. This space is not simply an expansion for business purposes—it is infrastructure that directly supports Hawai'i Island farmers, local jobs, and community food distribution systems.

Hilo Products remains deeply committed to responsible stewardship, compliance, and long-term investment in Hawai'i's agricultural economy. Approval of this revocable permit will significantly strengthen our ability to continue serving farmers, feeding communities, providing career opportunities, and sustaining a locally rooted food distribution system that has supported Hawai'i Island for generations.

On behalf of our employees, farmers, partners, and the families we serve, I respectfully ask for your favorable consideration.

Mahalo for your time and continued commitment to supporting local industry and agriculture in Hawai'i.

With Aloha,

Brandon Bartolome
President, Hilo Products, Inc.