

## Help the Little Guys: Saving Small Businesses in Hawaii

Stopping in front of a strikingly decorated shop, I peered through the clear window and was met with the delightful sight of shelves filled with merchandise, customers browsing through items, and friendly faces offering help. Several months later, my feet had taken me back to the shop. Frowning, I peeked through the dusty windows -- no merchandise lining the shelves, no customers browsing, and no friendly faces smiling. The shop was deserted, with only the "For Rent" sign hanging, swinging, from the dirty glass window.

According to CNN, Hawaii is one of the top ten worst states in which to start a business. *The Honolulu Advertiser* divulges that sales, unemployment, electricity, gas, and personal income taxes are amongst the highest in the nation. In order to do business in Hawaii, business owners must endure "interminable waiting periods for permits, onerous taxes, regulatory processes that seem designed to suffocate rather than promote private enterprise, and layers of bureaucracy" (Michael Tsai). Hawaii's high tax charges and low corporate income rate prove there is trouble in paradise. Small business owners cannot afford to start a business, and even if they could afford it, they would not be able to pay back their loans. Since there are fewer businesses in Hawaii, there are less commercial goods for residents to purchase, reducing the diversity in the goods sold. If this continues, it will lead to a lower standard of living. Less business means less competition, which is leading to an increase of already high prices. Fewer businesses also mean that there are fewer jobs. For families, unemployment and condensed wages can lower educational success by reducing the ability to offer a supportive learning atmosphere and by delaying or abandoning college plans.

There are many things that the state of Hawaii can do to lend a helping hand to the small business owners in Hawaii. Lowering taxes is an option, although this will likely take away from education and health care. Small business owners can try to understand changing customer expectations. Businesses should track what commercial goods customers use the most and try to build their business around a customer's needs. Reinforcing and rewarding customer loyalty

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is another option. Businesses should also follow up to see if there are any additional needs or concerns the customers may have. Customer education is important to help advertise a business's product. It helps the spread of awareness, advantages, and benefits of a product. Encouraging customers to try new products or services can help boost sales.

Clarence T.C. Ching was a businessman who helped to change Hawaii. He began with the family store at Damon Tract, a small business. This starting platform would later transform into his legacy. He has created a strong foundation for Hawaii and we can only help him by building on his dream. Ching supported the "little guy" by helping local people thrive in their own communities. In the same way, we can continue his legacy by supporting local businesses here in Hawaii.

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