


October 16, 2020

MEMO TO: EDB-85

F R O M: Michael J. Molina, 
Councilmember

SUBJECT: **TRANSMITTAL OF INFORMATIONAL DOCUMENT RELATING TO
LEGISLATION AND DISCUSSION ON THE EFFECT OF THE
CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC, RULES, CARES ACT, AND RELATED
ISSUES (EDB-85)**

The attached informational document pertains to Item EDB-85 on the
Committee's agenda.

Attachment

cc:

Council Chair
Alice L. Lee

Vice-Chair
Keani N.W. Rawlins-Fernandez

Presiding Officer Pro Tempore
Tasha Kama

Councilmembers
Riki Hokama
Kelly Takaya King
Michael J. Molina
Tamara Paltin
Shane M. Sinenci
Yuki Lei K. Sugimura



Director of Council Services
Traci N. T. Fujita, Esq.

COUNTY COUNCIL
COUNTY OF MAUI
200 S. HIGH STREET
WAILUKU, MAUI, HAWAII 96793
www.MauiCounty.us

October 15, 2020

Honorable Michael P. Victorino
Mayor, County of Maui
Wailuku, Hawaii 96793

Dear Mayor Victorino:

SUBJECT: HAWAII EMERGENCY LAULIMA PARTNERSHIP

As you are aware the Hawaii Emergency Laulima Partnership (H.E.L.P.) program is set to terminate on October 31, 2020. Accordingly, I would respectfully request your consideration for increasing the appropriation for the program and extending it until December 31, 2020.

At the end of May 2020, I respectfully requested an increased appropriation of \$5 million to H.E.L.P. with an increase of the monthly payment to families.

On July 19, 2020, you increased the appropriation \$3 million to H.E.L.P., which was a boost in the arm to the many families struggling as a result of the loss of jobs and a reduction in unemployment benefits.

As of Friday, October 9, 2020, Maui Economic Opportunity, Inc. (MEO) processed over 10,000 applications totaling more than \$5.2 million in assistance. This is truly a substantial benefit to our residents.

According, to Debbie Cabebe, Chief Executive Officer, MEO, the volume of applications for a monthly program is overwhelming for their staff. Ms. Cabebe recommends if the program was to continue that the payment be a one-time grant, which would assist with expediting review of the applications.

Therefore, I am respectfully requesting your consideration of my following recommendations for H.E.L.P.:

1. Increase the appropriation to the program an additional \$3 million;

Honorable Michael P. Victorino
Mayor, County of Maui
October 15, 2020
Page 2

2. Make the grant a one-time payment of \$1,500 to \$3,000 depending on household size;
3. Extend the program to December 31, 2020.

Even though travel to our islands has begun in limited fragments, people will remain unemployed because not all hospitality industry businesses are opening at the same time. Furthermore, since the Federal government is still uncertain about a second stimulus offering, continued assistance from H.E.L.P. will provide funds to many families in need.

Thank you for your consideration of my request. Should you have any questions please feel free contact me. I wish you and your family good health.

Sincerely,



MICHAEL J. MOLINA
Councilmember

CM:MHP:outgoing_HELP_Mayor01:grs

cc: Sandy Baz, Managing Director
Debbie Cabebe, CEO, MEO



October 14, 2020

Councilmember Mike Molina
Maui County Council
200 S. High Street
Wailuku, HI 96793

RE: Hawaii Emergency Laulima Partnership (H.E.L.P)

Dear Councilmember Molina:

I am writing in response to your October 12, 2020 correspondence regarding constituents' concerns with the application process.

1. The online application requests an email address, however the printable hard copy does not.
 - a. This is intentional. The preferred method to apply is online. If an individual has an email address, they can submit an online application. The printable hard copy applications were created for individuals who do not have access to email.
2. The printed hard copy of the application requests a birthdate in one area and date of birth in another.
 - a. This was an oversight on our part. You are the first person to bring this error to our attention. Most applicants are only responding to the question once.
3. The required documents section asks for a proof of layoff, or a letter from the employer. You have been advised that MEO is asking for both.
 - a. If this is happening, it is a misunderstanding on the part of the staff person or the client. As of Friday, we have processed over 10,100 applications, totaling more than \$5,261,000. We have supervisors, office staff and program staff, including our senior executives, processing applications along with three temporary staff. As of two weeks ago, the Mayor's office and County finance staff are also assisting. With this many individuals involved, there is bound to be misunderstanding. I have sent out an email blast with a friendly reminder to staff that the document requirement is either/or.
4. Not accepting redacted financial statements
 - a. This is a common practice for federally funded programs that provide financial assistance. It is to ensure that there is a true need and the individual is not making nonessential purchases and then asking for public assistance. It also is to ensure that the applicants do not transfer large sums of money into

The Promise of Community Action

Community Action changes people's lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes America a better place to live. We care about the entire community, and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.



someone else's account so they will qualify for HELP. We must be good stewards of public funds.

- 5. Requiring the most up to date utility bills can add delays.
 - a. Typically assistance funds require that we obtain current documents to process payments. This prevents payment duplication. We had numerous applicants submit the same bill with each request for assistance. The delay came when we fell behind the application process due to a lapse in funding between HELP 1 and HELP 2. We did not have funds to operate for 2 ½ weeks, and the applications kept coming in. With this, the documents on file were outdated and we were trying to prevent overpayment. The Mayor contacted me last week and asked, due to the backlog of applications, that we accept whatever bill was presented at the time of application. We documented the Mayor's directive for auditing purposes, and implemented that process which has expedited the process considerably.

- 6. Would it be our recommendation to increase funding to extend HELP to December 31, 2020.

- a. We understand that families are struggling and even if called back to work, they may still be behind on their bills. With that in mind, we think extending assistance to December 31, 2020 would be beneficial to the community. However, we cannot commit to administer the program in its current format through the end of the year. Our staff workload is over capacity and the current program design puts a tremendous burden, particularly, on our fiscal staff. We have very defined internal controls, which works well for us and has resulted in no findings on our annual audits, but these controls are not designed to handle such volume. For the more than 10,100 applications processed, each one averaged three different payments, which means that the fiscal staff handled over 30,000 HELP transactions from April 1 to Oct 9. This is in addition to their regular work, which is already a heavy load. As the year comes to an end, we also have regular program outcomes that we are responsible for, and we must prepare for our annual audit and for a federal program audit.
- b. It would be our recommendation for the County to issue assistance checks to individuals who have lost income due to COVID. We recommend one time payments at the following funding levels:

Household size	Benefit Amount
1-2	\$1,000.00
3-4	\$1,500.00
5-6	\$ 2,000.00
7 +	\$ 2,500.00

When this journey began, we signed up to administer a three-month assistance program modeled after the HELP program established after 9/11. Little did we know, that due to COVID restrictions, the program would look very different. This created several challenges for MEO and our clients. Six months later, the need continues. It is often said, "You don't know, what you don't know". This was defiantly the situation with HELP. Due to the sheer volume, it would have been best to hire a program administrator, program clerk, three fiscal staff and four case managers.

As you know, it is likely that the economy will take several years to recover. In the meantime, we need to create job opportunities for those who are unemployed or underemployed. In my opinion this would make the most long term impact on recovery.

Please let me know if you have any additional questions.

Sincerely,



Debbie Cabebe, SPHR
Chief Executive Officer

EDB Committee

From: Mike J. Molina
Sent: Friday, October 16, 2020 12:09 PM
To: EDB Committee
Cc: Lesley J. Milner
Subject: Letter to Mayor re: H.E.L.P. program EDB-85
Attachments: trans_edb_85_HELP_sign.pdf; HELP_Mayor01_sign.pdf; HELP_MEO_01_rspns.pdf