

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**
Council of the County of Maui

MINUTES

April 15, 2025

Pā‘ia Community Center, Social Hall

CONVENE: 6:04 p.m.

PRESENT: Councilmember Yuki Lei K. Sugimura, Chair
Councilmember Tasha Kama, Vice-Chair
Councilmember Tom Cook, Member
Councilmember Gabe Johnson, Member
Councilmember Tamara Paltin, Member
Councilmember Keani N.W. Rawlins-Fernandez, Member (Out 6:55 p.m.)
Councilmember Shane M. Sinenci, Member
Councilmember Nohelani U‘u-Hodgins, Member

EXCUSED: Councilmember Alice L. Lee, Member

STAFF: Ellen McKinley, Legislative Analyst
Jennifer Yamashita, Committee Secretary
Carla Nakata, Legislative Attorney
Jean Pokipala, Council Services Assistant Clerk

OTHERS: Marcy Martin, Director, Department of Finance

Testifiers:

Daniel Southmayd
Will Spence, Hui Noeau Visual Art Center
Brian Kohne, Maui Film Office
Caprice Mallett, Maui Farmer Support Network
Ashley Moody, Grow Some Good
Harriet Witt
Nicole Hokoana
Francine Aarona
Michael Du Pont, Makawao Parade
Zoe Kauha‘aha‘a-Souza, Ha‘ikū Head Start
Chelsey Miguel
Georgia Pinsky, Maui Farmer Support Network
Jill Wirt, Maui Nui Marine Resource Council
Desilee Santiago
TJ Daya, Director, Boys and Girls Club Maui
Makena Fujita, Boys and Girls Club Maui
Kacy Schwen, Boys and Girls Club Maui
Malcolm Fujita, Boys and Girls Club Maui
Charen Kepler, Ka Ipu Kukui

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Nia Fitzpatrick, Maui Economic Opportunity
Madison Pasion, Maui Economic Development Board
Cameron Rodgers, Maui Economic Development Board
Shay Chan Hodges
Nick Nikhilananda
Cassi Yamashita, MEO Community Service Director
Dan Ellis, Pā'ia Sugar Mill
Moi Kawaakoa
Marie (Rhea) Bjarnson
Maile Davis
Jerry Isdale, Mālama Hamakua Maui
Lucienne de Naie
Tania Hansen, Maui Rescue Mission

Others (50)

PRESS: *Akakū: Maui Community Television, Inc.*

CHAIR SUGIMURA: . . .*(gavel)*. . . Okay. All right. Welcome to the Budget, Finance, Economic Development Committee. That was the gavel. We have started this meeting. It is now 6:04 p.m., and I want to thank all of you for allowing us to be here. This is our residency area meeting for the area that you have your Councilmember U'u-Hodgins. And I'm going to have her introduce all the Councilmembers here.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Thank you, Yuki. Good afternoon. Good evening, everyone.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: . . .*(inaudible)*. . .

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Oh, you know what? Here, I'll use this one.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Oh, okay.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Hello? Okay. That sounds better. Sorry, I yanked that one pretty far. My bad. Okay. I'll start on this side. From South Maui, we have Tom Cook with us today. Yay. Next to him, we have from Lāna'i, Mr. Gabe Johnson. And we have next to him, Member Kama from Kahului. And of course, our Budget Chair from Upcountry, Yuki Lei Sugimura. We have from the West Side, Tamara Paltin. From Moloka'i, we have Member Rawlins-Fernandez.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Aloha 'auinalā kākou.

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COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: We're also going to excuse her today at about 6:50. She said 7:00, but she needs to get to the airport to hug her children tonight. So, we are going to excuse her. So, say all the things you need to say, and then she's going to depart. And then lastly, but not least, we have Member Shane Sinenci from Hāna.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you, Member U'u-Hodgins. We are happy to be here. And I just want to say that...I want to acknowledge our Staff who's here. That's Carla Nakata, with the pink outfit on that side. She's actually an attorney, and taking notes and making sure we are doing this all legal. We also have...oh, God, I just...Ellen...I'm sorry, Ellen McKinley--I just went blank--Ellen, who's an Analyst with us. And Jean Pokipala and Jennifer Yamashita, who took you in and made sure that all your forms were filled when you walked in. At that desk, there is a manual. And if you want to take a paper...a survey that we're doing just to hear from the community about what you think are the budget priorities that we should look at. So, we've been at...it's been online. So, if you want to do it online, you can catch it on mauicounty.us on our...on our website. But we want to hear from you. We've been having very good results. And that paper there will be also added to the tally.

ITEM 1: PROPOSED FISCAL YEAR 2026 BUDGET FOR THE
COUNTY OF MAUI (BILL 41 (2025), BILL 42 (2025), BILL 43
(2025), BILL 44 (2025), BILL 45 (2025), BILL 46 (2025), and
RESOLUTION 25-83)

CHAIR SUGIMURA: We have today, at our request, Marcy Martin, who is actually the Director of the Department of Finance. She's right there. She also was a real property tax assessor and boss there. And the reason why we asked her to come is, as soon as they mailed out the real property tax assessments, our calls...there were calls to our offices and emails about how come. So, maybe Marcy can say a few words, and then after she's done, she'll place herself in the back somewhere, and you can have a one-on-one with her. Marcy?

MS. MARTIN: Well, thank you, Budget Chair and the County Council, for inviting me--oh, thank you--here tonight to speak about property taxes. So, assessment notices were mailed on March 15th. And like in the past few years, the property values increased. And the increases were due to general market value increases...that is, what properties are being sold for. So, the value of your property should be what you can sell it for as of between June and January prior to receiving your assessment notice. The Mayor's Budget did include a tax rate decrease for the Owner-Occupied class, and tier adjustments for the Owner-Occupied and Long-Term Rental classifications. Now, next, the County Council will begin to deliberate on the tiers and the tax rates. So, it is appropriate, if you want to testify on what you think about property taxes in the same manner that you'll be testifying about other things, but you'll have a longer

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period. You can do that at the County Council through email on the website. But I did want to mention the targeted tax relief that's available. We have an owner-occupied exemption that takes off \$300,000 from the value of your home, and that's for people who live in their homes full-time, and you get a favorable tax rate. And you only need to apply once for the home exemption, and the deadline is December 31st. Once you have your home exemption, you can be eligible for a circuit breaker tax credit, which is an income-based tax credit based upon your income and the value of your home...not your land and your home, but just your home. And this past year, the County Council updated the circuit breaker ordinance, and kind of eased the criteria so that it reflected the increases in prices that have occurred over the past few years. And that, you would have to apply for every year, and the application period is between August 1st and December 31st. And that is especially applicable to older taxpayers a lot of times. A young person can qualify, but most of the people in the program are...you know, have owned for a really long time. And the new program we have is the long-term rental exemption. And that will give you \$200,000 off the value of your home, in addition to a favorable Long-Term Rental classification. And the criteria for that is, you need to rent for one year to a single tenant. And so, with that, you have to apply every year. And if you apply online, we now have a program that will remind you to reapply. And you can also stack that on top of your home exemption. So, if you have two houses, you could have a long-term rental exemption on one house, and the home exemption on the other house. Let's see. And of course, the Real Property Tax Office is open Monday through Friday, 8:00 to 4:00. And we can be reached in-person by phone or email. The email is rpa@co.maui.hi.us. Phone number is 270-7297. And our website is mauipropertytax.com. And we are a very reachable, public-facing department. There's no lines, you can walk in...and we will answer the phone and answer emails. So, any time of year, if you have questions regarding your assessment, it's good to call. As a matter of fact, it's good to call before you get your assessment notice because if there's corrections that need to be made, it would be made before your assessment notice is sent out. So, like she said, Yuki Lei, I will be outside if you want to come talk to me and ask me any questions. And thank you for this opportunity.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Thank you, Director Martin. Really appreciate, and...and for every meeting she's come to, people have asked her questions. But do take down the phone number. They really are accessible, right? So, (808) 270-7297, or you can walk in the office. And they...they are here to help you. I wanted to now start with testimony. And we're anxious and interested to hear from you. When you come to the mic there, please identify yourself and an organization you're with, if it applies. You can...you can also do it anonymously. And you can...I'm sure that's how you must have signed in, Anonymous, because we've had people do that. So, we respect that also. But you need to take the initiative to sign yourself in as Anonymous because our...our Staff will be announcing the testifiers in the order that you have signed up. You will have three minutes to testify, and if you're still not done, you will be given another 30

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seconds to complete. And hang around because the Members might have questions for you. And if they do, then, you know, you can answer the questions and then be seated. We are very appreciative that you made the time to be with us. We have noticed that because we've had these district meetings, the number of testifiers that actually have to come to the Chamber is not as much as we've seen in years past. So, this is a very effective way of us being with you. So, at this time, I would like to take the first testifier.

MS. NAKATA: Thank you, Chair. The first testifier is Will Spence, and he'll be followed by Brian Kohne.

. . . BEGIN PUBLIC TESTIMONY . . .

MR. SPENCE: Aloha, Members. I'm...it's nice to see you again. I couldn't make the Upcountry one, I got busy and whatnot, but I still wanted to come and testify. I'm here tonight to support the request by the Hui Noeau for \$50,000 for the Art with Aloha Program, and \$75,000 for the Hui Youth and Family Arts Education Outreach programs. I...I...maybe I can point out a couple highlights. With the money that was put in the budget last year for the Art with Aloha programs, we went from 16 workshops to 51 workshops, where you have a practitioner come in and teach and interact with the community, teaching various skills in whatever they're a practitioner in. We supported...in 2023, we supported...helped to support three practitioners. Last year, we helped support 12. So, inviting them in, paying them...I mean, I'm sure it's not their whole salary or whatever, but being able to support that...that part of the community is very important to us. The youth programs, we're requesting 75,000. Every year, I'm so impressed with how many keiki we help support and reach out to. If you were to do a quick Google search, art as therapy, you would see that especially for children, the expression of art is very important to them. And it...it gives them a way to express themselves that maybe isn't available in other ways. The...especially we reach out to the fire victims in Lāhainā, we're very supportive of them. We reach out to the teachers, and...and go help them. Also, we work with Ka Hale A Ke Ola, and work with the homeless children that are in the shelter. So, really helpful, meaningful work. I can't tell you how proud I am to be associated with this organization. And I know I've seen some of you up there. Please, the rest of you come up, visit the grounds, see what we're doing. It's a really wonderful place. And I know we...I don't think last year we reached out to Moloka'i, but I know this year we did. And so, we're...we're doing some art programs there. And of course, on Lāna'i. And it just...it makes me happy that we're reaching out. You know, the...the public education doesn't support so much anymore. We're trying to fill and help that move along. So, thank you very much.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you very much. Any questions? Seeing none. Thank you, Will. Next testifier, please.

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MS. NAKATA: Thank you, Chair. The next testifier is Brian Kohne. He'll be followed by Caprice Mallett.

MR. KOHNE: Mahalo, Councilmembers, Committee Chair. I am Brian Kohne, I am Maui's Film Commissioner. I am also an Associate Professor at UH Maui College over the last seven years. I built Academy for Creative Media Maui with degrees in filmmaking, graphic design, and a new one in animation. We're working really hard in the coming years to synergize education and industry. But I'm here today to speak in support of MEDB and the many programs, the vital programs that they...they provide our community. And look no further than the Maui Film Office. For the past year, I've been working with...we've been working with MEDB to develop a series of ambitious initiatives that will begin to roll out in the coming year, initiatives designed to help our community understand these industries as blue collar, that there's a seat at the table for everybody. And it's going to take time, and it's going to take work. It's going to take all of us working together to see things in a different way. I'm not going to lie, the industry in Hawai'i right now is in a really, really bad place, probably the darkest place it's been in 20 years. But we can rise through education, and the creation of right-sized industry, industry that we can participate in, you can be a part of--your kids, your neighbors, your cousins. Again, I speak on...on behalf of MEDB, and the many, many vital programs that they operate, and I appreciate your time. Any questions?

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you very much, Commissioner Kohne. So, in the budget, how much is the Film Office in for, for . . . *(inaudible)*. . .

MR. KOHNE: My understanding is that there's a line item through MEDB for \$345,000. Of that, 250 is for the office and Staff and...and the initiatives that we pursue, and 95 of that is for a new thing that we're creating, the Wailuku Film Festival...a film festival about us, with categories in student, Made in Hawai'i, and indigenous categories. And it will synergize education and industry.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Thank you very much. Any questions? Member Paltin.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Mr. Kohne. I just...is...is that just...that's a second 95,000 for the film fest?

MR. KOHNE: That would be for Fiscal Year 2026, correct. Yes. I assume that's what we're speaking of. It's a line item in the Fiscal Year 2026.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Oh, okay. When we just did a budget amendment for Fiscal Year '25, so --

MR. KOHNE: Correct.

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COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: -- we're stacking those for a film festival in '26?

MR. KOHNE: Correct. The Wailuku Film Festival. We've been working on it all year, and we're going to start to have one-off events. The first main event will occur in June of 2026, but we're going to have a series of events that will be reaching into our community in a deep way. Premiers of local films; 35th anniversary screening of Picture Bride, a film that won Sundance that was made by people in Hawai'i. We're doing that in partnership with Nisei Memorial. We're going to...we're going to partner with Pacific Whale Foundation and put on the Whale Film Festival, and more. So, the Wailuku Film Festival is...is far more dynamic than...than I'd have the time to explain at this time.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you very much.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you.

MR. KOHNE: Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Member Rawlins-Fernandez.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Aloha, Mr. Kohne. Mahalo, for your testimony.

MR. KOHNE: Certainly.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Really quickly, how much of your budget is for the pilot project for the nonprofit?

MR. KOHNE: The project that we've been describing, nothing in our budget. We have the 250 operating budget, and then the 95 for the Wailuku Film Festival. So, if...if we're going to pursue that, that would have to be an item that would have to be added to...

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo for that clarification. Because I was told it was included in there.

MR. KOHNE: Oh. Yes, it is not.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Okay.

MR. KOHNE: Thank you.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo.

MR. KOHNE: There's a little bit of seed, but nothing to actually pursue that initiative. Although that initiative, as you might know, is already underway. We have

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computers going to UH Outreach Center because we're going to create in-person educational opportunities for our...for our friends on Moloka'i, which we'd like to extend to Lāna'i as well in the coming years.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Okay.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo.

MR. KOHNE: Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you very much. Next testifier.

MS. NAKATA: Thank you, Chair. The next testifier is Caprice Mallett, who will be followed by Harriet Witt.

MS. MALLET: Good evening. My name is Caprice Mallett, and pardon my use of notes, if you will. I'm a new farmer and the owner of Haleakala Farm in Kula. And I appreciate the opportunity tonight to speak about Maui Farmer Support Network. MFSN is a vital resource for new farmers like me. Maui County supports the Farmers Apprentice Mentoring Program, or known as FAM, and graduates about 20 new farmers every year. I was a graduate last year from cohort number 9. And MFSN provides an important next-level platform of resources to continue the momentum that was created during the FAM Program. Having support and education as a platform available once a farmer starts to develop a farm, producing food, and expanding their skillsets is really a critical link to taking a farmer to the next level, rather than leaving them with an education, but perhaps lacking the practical skills, tools, resource, and guidance to put into action. I believe it's really imperative for the County to continue to support the development process of new farmers through Maui Farmer Support Network. Some examples of how I've benefited from that...coaching. The one-on-one coaching through the network has been really invaluable to me. I received direct guidance over the last few months on grant applications, which I had never written a grant proposal before. I've developed several Grown on Maui value-added products that the coaching is helping me to get into online markets. And currently, they're assisting with developing a website for the farm and a social media presence, which I'm probably the only person in the room that has never used social media. But, you know, it's...you're never too old to learn. So, they're just very patient. They're taking me through it so we can get a presence up for the farm. They offer Laulima days. And so, next week, they're bringing a crew out to the farm to assist with the larger land and clearing projects that I physically can't do myself, nor can I afford to hire a crew to do that for me. And this community collaboration will open up a new planting block for food production. Their tool library...I'm scheduled next month to have them come out and chip a years' worth of branches into compost to put into my...my garlic beds. And the Laulima days and the tool library, the resources, just so important. Because a new farmer generally doesn't have a lot of funding, and having those

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resources available to get you through that next level to where you're producing and using the principles that were learned in FAM is really, really important. . . .(inaudible). . . .(timer sounds). . .

CHAIR SUGIMURA: 30 seconds.

MS. MALLET: I'll wrap up. So, I'm beyond grateful for the help and guidance that I've gotten from Maui Food...Maui Farmer Support Network, and appeal to the board to continue to fund this program. Through their support, we're practicing regenerative farming, we're growing food, we're vending at farmers' markets, we're selling on Maui Hub and in local stores, and we're donating to the community. Maui Farmer Support Network is an essential resource to successfully raise the next generation of Maui farmers.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Any questions? Seeing none. All right. Thank you very much.

MS. MALLET: Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Next testifier.

MS. NAKATA: Chair, the next testifier is Harriet Witt, she'll be followed by Francine Aarona.

MS. WITT: Thank you. For an elf [*phonetic*]? My name is Harriet Witt, and I'm here as an individual citizen. Thank you for this opportunity. If you don't ever need to eat, you can disregard what I...what's bringing me here tonight. What's bringing me here tonight is the fact that we do need to eat, and if our food is not being grown on-island, we are vulnerable to marketplace insanity...because it's got to be flown in or shipped in, and that's where the insanity comes in. There are people growing food on Maui. We just heard about that, and we're very glad. But not enough people are growing food on Maui. Our keiki are learning how to grow food, thanks to Grow Some Good. And I have donated hundreds of hours of my time to this organization because it's obvious that kids don't learn how to grow food by Googling. You got to be out there in the dirt. You learn through your body. And not only do they learn how to grow food, which means there's more chance that they're going to grow up to be farming, or at least grow their own food, but they also improve tremendously psychologically. I've seen what happens when kids come out of the school into the garden, and I've seen what happens after they've been in the garden for an hour. They connect with their own nature because they're connecting with nature. Their curiosity turns on, their sense of wonder turns on, and they want to learn. They're not just learning because they have to pass a test. So, the psychological benefits of the garden are incredible, and the physical need, so that we can continue to eat, is beyond words. So, I hope that you can see to the \$150,000 grant to the

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County Department of Agriculture to...for the line item grant for Grow Some Good. Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you very much. Any questions? Seeing none. Thank you very much. Next testifier.

MS. NAKATA: Thank you, Chair. The next testifier is Francine Aaronson, she'll be followed by Zoe Kauha'aha'a...excuse me, Kauha'aha'a.

MS. AARONSON: Aloha, Councilmembers, community. Before I go into my testify [sic], I want everybody to applaud our Councilmembers. I don't know if you have time to listen to them today, but they've been there all day, and you are here tonight to listen to us. So, mahalo for allowing me to share my mana'o with you. You know, I have a lot of things that I want this budget to do, and so do you. But my main thing is road conditions. We have had too many, too many accidents lately. And it's carelessness, not thinking, but also, not the proper setup on our roads. And I know we have proposals. I want to support Nohe on the sidewalks in Makawao. I want it to extend to Pā'ia because our sidewalks are meh...we need more help on that...but also, the bumps fronting Pā'ia School. We had a terrible accident not too long ago. I think the ideal bumps are at Kekaulike. You get to the bump before you hit the sidewalk. That'll remind you that you need to stop. But we need to be mindful of our driving, our education. But we need to shape up our road conditions. So, if we can extend from Pā'ia, Makawao, down into Pā'ia, our crosswalks. The municipal crosswalk by the municipal parking lot is so dangerous because the cars that pass from the stoplight going through the town, they're making it. I'm coming out of Ae Lane. I have to do crosses before I get on there. Because even when I get there, the car behind me is passing me because I'm not going fast enough for him. So, that's how accidents happen. So, road conditions, we need that support in the proposals, I support it 100 percent. And if we could extend more of it down, not only Pā'ia and Makawao, but the school, but in the town as well. A lot of jaywalking, a lot of jaywalking. A lot of skateboarding on the road. So, we need to educate our keiki as well. . . .(timer sounds). . . So, mahalo so much for allowing me to share.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you, Auntie Mopsy. So, guess what? Today is her birthday. And she's spending it with us.

MS. AARONSON: They wanted to come over and have dinner tonight. Then I told them, oh, cannot, I have a meeting. They go, what? Yeah, I have a meeting. But it's your birthday. Every day of the month is your birthday. That's my rule of thumb. Mahalo.

****Singing Happy Birthday****

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Happy birthday to you. Happy birthday to you. Happy birthday, dear Auntie Mopsy. Happy birthday to you.

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MS. AARONA: Mahalo.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: We love you. Oh, any questions? Okay. Next testifier.

MS. NAKATA: The next testifier is Zoe Kauha'aha'a, she'll be followed by Daniel Southmayd.

MS. KAUHA'AHA'A-SOUZA: My name's Zoe.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: Hi, Zoe.

MS. KAUHA'AHA'A-SOUZA: I go to Ha'ikū Head Start. Thank you for having Ha'ikū Head Start this year. Please continue funding...

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: She'd like to testify on behalf of Ha'ikū Head Start. You got shy.

MS. FITZPATRICK: That was so good.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You did great. But...yeah. We would like to ask for you guys to continue funding Ha'ikū Head Start, and all the...all the Head Starts around.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Thank you, Zoe.

MS. FITZPATRICK: I have my own turn, but I'm the teacher. I just wanted to come up with her. Thank you, guys.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Very good. Thank you.

MS. KAUHA'AHA'A-SOUZA: Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Any...oh.

MS. KAUHA'AHAA: Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Okay. No questions. So, next testifier.

MS. NAKATA: Thank you, Chair. The next testifier is Daniel Southmayd, he'll be followed by Chelsey Miguel.

MR. SOUTHMAYD: Aloha, Council, and mahalo. My name is Daniel Southmayd. I am a medical case manager with Maui AIDS Foundation. And I know we had a really good team showing last night in Kihei, but I come representing my client's...client services department. And I've witnessed firsthand the positive effects that my

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agency's efforts have on our community as a whole. In my four-and-a-half years with the agency, I've had the privilege of working directly with people living with HIV every day. Although HIV is now considered a manageable disease, even those who remain adherent to their medications and maintain undetectable viral loads---and remember, undetectable equals untransmittable--they're subject to chronic inflammation. It increases comorbidities and decreases overall lifespan by approximately 15 years. I'm proud to be the keeper of their mo'olelo, and can share a few snapshots with you from my clients today--recently-diagnosed clients with no knowledge of HIV who were frightened they would die within months. Clients who, through conversation and education, made the decision to face their substance abuse and enter rehab services. Clients devastated by the Maui wildfires, some of whom are married with children who rallied, and with our assistance, navigated the current housing crisis on Maui successfully. Clients with children who are becoming young adults, and needed support with STI and HIV education and testing, and access to safe sex materials. Clients living on less than \$500 a month, some with wasting syndrome, who need assistance with medical care, housing costs, and basic necessities, such as food and transportation. Clients for whom sexual identity and sexual health carries deep cultural stigma. Members of Maui's houseless population who lack access not only to the security and comfort of a roof over their head, but lack access to medical and mental health care. Clients who are elderly and isolated, often alone, and who I've supported, as I am currently, at the end of their lives. These are my clients, and these are members of our Maui community, of our 'ohana. My agency is grateful, all of us, for the ongoing support and funding to achieve a healthy Maui community. Continued funding of our services will offer Maui County an invaluable resource to maintain the health and well-being of its community. Mahalo nui for your time, attention, support, and continuing care.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you very much. Any questions? Thank you for the work you do. You know, the people who are in the back, there are some empty seats in the front if you would like to join us.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: . . .*(inaudible)*. . . front of the class.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Yeah, front of the class. All right. Next testifier.

MS. NAKATA: Thank you, Chair. The next testifier is Chelsey Miguel, she'll be followed by TJ Daya.

MS. MIGUEL: Aloha, Councilmembers. My name is Chelsey Ann Miguel, and I'm a freshman from King Kekaulike High School, and I stand as a product from STEMworks programs funded by MEDB, and I...that have guided my educational journey towards...ever since middle school in Kalama Robotics. STEMworks didn't introduce me to technology, it transformed my future. Through its engineering...to the introduction to engineering for girls, challenges, and robotics camps, and also the astronomy day, I've...I've never...I've fully transformed

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myself, and discovered that STEM isn't really about memorization and rigorous, monotonous tasks and textbooks, it's all about building solutions to provide a better life and community for Hawai'i. One experience that changed everything was my internship in the agricultural...in...in...in regards to Mother Mushrooms funded by MEDB, I...which I was supported by mentors and companies that fully led to my potential. And I created an...an agricultural-friendly solution for a temperature-cooling bot in regards to Mother Mushrooms. Thank you. What makes STEMworks unique is how it connects classrooms to learning real-world solutions and applications. Before these programs, I wasn't really interested in engineering at all, mostly because I wasn't...I wasn't experienced in hands-on activity. I was mostly taught in lectures rather than actually going hands-on and experiencing these chemical changes in real life. And rather that, I want...and rather that...than that, found out that learning real applications through STEMworks figured...made me figure out that I wanted to do engineering, rather than anything theoretical and boring and rigorous. The funding you provide don't...doesn't just support programs, it invests in keiki who will become problem solvers, innovators, and leaders that Hawai'i needs. Each dollar creates a ripple of opportunity that extends far beyond every single workshop or competition. And I humbly ask for your considered support of MEDB STEMworks. And these programs truly change lives, and they changed mine. Mahalo nui for your time and consideration. Any questions?

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Wonderful. Member Paltin has a question.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Ms. Miguel. A few questions. Did you know that the County of Maui offers a bonus for engineers because we really want some to come?

MS. MIGUEL: No, I didn't know that.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Did you know that...why we invest in the STEM Program?

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Do you know why?

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Because we want you to come work with us. And...and we...we have at least two female engineers that I know of, so you'd fit right in.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you very much.

MS. MIGUEL: Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: All right. Next testifier.

MS. NAKATA: The next testifier is TJ Daya, who will be followed by Makena Fujita.

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MR. DAYA: Aloha, Councilmembers. Good to see everyone again. My name's TJ, Director of Operations, Boys and Girls Clubs of Maui, where we inspire and enable all young people, especially those who need us the most, to realize their full potential as productive, caring, and responsible citizens. I love coming to these meetings because I actually love to mahalo you all for investing in our keiki and 'ōpio. We're open over 240 days a year, Monday through Friday, after school until 7:00 p.m. School-out days, we're open 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., where kids have complete and free access to programs in character and citizenship; where they learn leadership skills that they won't get anywhere else; healthy lifestyles, where they learn to make positive lifestyle choices, where they have role models who are staff, who teach them and are there to support them through difficult times, and have those hard conversations that parents aren't always comfortable having. Then you have the arts. Every day, kids have access to performing arts, visual arts, music at some clubs, sports, fitness, recreation, where the kids get to stay active every day, education, and even workforce development. So, I always talk about six clubhouses. We serve over 1,200 kids. In Makawao and Ha'ikū alone, it's closer to just 600 kids between those two clubhouses. So, thank you guys for continuing support, and those numbers continue to grow over the years. And you're going to hear from one of our Youth of the Years right after me, and she'll tell the story much better of how it's impacted her. And, you know, the kids have access to food. We partner with Maui Food Bank. MEO is incredible at providing transportation to our clubs. And...yeah, just wanted to thank you guys once again. I'm looking forward to you guys hearing from Makena and our Makawao Club Director. But we couldn't do the great work without you, and we hope it continues for many years to come. So, it's been 25 years, and we're looking forward to 26. And...yeah. Mahalo, and have a great evening.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you, TJ. Any questions? Seeing none. Next testifier.

MS. NAKATA: The next testifier is Makena Fujita, who will be followed by Kacy Schwen.

MS. FUJITA: Hello, Councilmembers. My name is Makena Fujita, and I'm 15 years old, currently attending King Kekaulike High School. I also attend the Makawao Boys and Girls Club, which has benefited me extremely. I recently traveled to O'ahu, representing Maui as the Boys and Girls Club Youth of the Year. This experience has opened my eyes to more opportunities that I never would have thought of before. Having this program lets me show the other kids the opportunities that the club gives them. The Boys and Girls Club has also given me a safe place to learn more and express my passions, such as STEM. At club, we have access to STEM kits, which kids like me can immerse ourselves in to further practice our hobbies. But getting funding for robotics and STEM for school and club has always been tough to come by. For example, at our school, our robotics team is heavily underfunded, and it upsets me to see that we do not have the resources to fully participate in competitions and practices. Lacking equipment...equipment and resources makes it impossible for youth to learn and grow. Thank you for the continued program support for the

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Makawao Boys and Girls Club programming. It gives youth such...such as myself a place to succeed in academics and workforce readiness. It has given myself and other youth of Maui opportunities I never thought were possible. Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Any questions? Seeing none. Thank you very much. Next testifier.

MS. NAKATA: Thank you, Chair. The next testifier is Kacy Schwen. She'll be followed by Malcolm Fujita.

MR. SCHWEN: Hi, how are you guys? My name's Kacy, I'm the Club Director at Makawao. I've been up there for about three years now. First, I wanted to say thank you for all this continued support on the roof project. That was a huge deal. We've been battling that for about five years. Got done last month. It's been a huge weight off all our shoulders, MEO, and us to finally get that done. Made the building way safer for all the kids. So, thank you guys so much for that. We were able to work out of the community center and out of Eddie Tam and our mobile unit, so we did continue programming. We still had about 60 youth a day out of the park. Now we're back in the club. So, again, it's been a huge blessing. Thank you so much. Beginning of the semester, we had a huge bus shortage around the island, especially up in Makawao. We were able to, you know, keep our doors open. We had almost 115 kids a day, which is a huge ADA for us. MEO was struggling, but we made it through. It's all settled down now. It did open the door for Kaiapuni kids to actually start attending the club. So, we have a huge Kaiapuni club attendance right now. They are doing hula. We're doing more programming for music too, for ukulele. So, funding for that is always huge for us. We want to continue to push that, especially Upcountry. Right now, current members, ages 8 to 17, we have about 330 at the Makawao club alone. So, we're one of the bigger clubs on the island. Our current ADA is about 70, with a teen ADA of 14...14 age and over of about 20. So, this year, I'm proud to say, we have 20-plus youth in our work-based learning program. So, that is just a workforce readiness. They're filling out applications. They're doing basically interviews to get hired on at the club. They get \$50 stipends for working at the club. They get out-of-club experience. I know we worked with the aquarium. We've worked with the airport. We've worked a lot around the island. Get the kids out there, get them some work-based experience. They're learning. They're making some money. Some of them are saving for college. I'm now a reference for three of the kids this summer, which is a little scary, but it's awesome that they're applying...they're applying for summer jobs. They're applying for afterschool with some money in their pocket. So, it's an amazing program that I hope to continue. Sports program; supply STEM kits, like Makena said, always huge for us. We love STEM kits, robotics. We want to push that as much as we can on the kids. So, thank you guys for your continued support. Appreciate it.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you for the work you do.

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MR. SCHWEN: Yeah.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Any questions? See none. Thank you. Next testifier.

MS. NAKATA: The next testifier is Malcolm Fujita, who will be followed by Nia Fitzpatrick.

MR. FUJITA: All right. That was my government name. I'm really Macky Mack. Hello, everybody. Thank you. Thank you for joining me tonight. I have some wonderful news about a timeshare that I want to interest you in. But before I do, seriously, I want to thank all you Councilmembers for your continued support with the Boys and Girls Club of Maui, because from a parent's point of view, I got to say, it's benefited our family tremendously. I've had three children go through the Boys and Girls Club of Maui, and I can't thank them enough. So, how about a round of applause for all the wonderful members that guide these children, and help them, and support them through life? Because let's face it, like the families today, we're working a lot, right? We work a lot. So, the Boys and Girls Club of Maui is a great outlet for kids to go to and learn and experience things, build relationships, and do things that families at home can't really do...all the activities that they do at the Boys and Girls Club. Like can you imagine doing volleyball, then doing some STEM activities with your kids at home, and then having to do all these other different activities that they offer there, and all along the way, having fun and guiding them to be successful members of our community, and probably taking the seats that you see right here later on in the future. So, I'd like to say thank you, and continue your support for the Boys and Girls Club of Maui and Hawai'i, as you guys are the people who...we really need you to support them. Thank you guys very much.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Macky Mack. So, isn't that your daughter who is the...

MR. FUJITA: Yes, it is.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Please say that.

MR. FUJITA: That is my daughter, the Maui Youth of the Year Award winner, Makena Fujita. So, proud of her. That was one of my most proudest moment as a father when I got to hear her speech on stage in front of 500 people as we did a fundraiser for the Boys and Girls Club of Maui. And it was just a proud moment, teared up, you know. And that's the kind of things that they offer. They offer guidance in pursuing challenging things that a lot of kids don't get, you know. And that's one of the great things about the Boys and Girls Club of Maui. So, you guys continue support. Thank you. Even support them more, you know. Throw a little extra funding their way. They can deserve it, and they need it. Thank you.

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CHAIR SUGIMURA: Congratulations to you.

MR. FUJITA: Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Any questions? See none. All right. Next. Next testifier.

MS. NAKATA: The next testifier is Nia Fitzpatrick, who will be followed by Madison Pasion.

MS. FITZPATRICK: Good evening. My name is Nia...Nia Fitzpatrick. I am currently lead teacher, at Ha'ikū Head Start, which is run by Maui Economic Opportunity. I would like to thank you guys for your continued support of MEO. We...I think, company-wide, really appreciate the ways that you guys support MEO. And, you know, just given the political climate, we especially appreciate that we know we have your support here at home. I've...I've...I've actually only worked at MEO a couple of years so far, and my little buddy there, she started with us last school year, and then we were able to finish her...like she'll be graduating to kinder. So, yeah, I've seen firsthand the value and benefit of MEO and Head Start here on Maui for our children and their families. Especially, just like the gentleman prior was saying, parents need to work. And so, we are specifically asking for funding for the second half of our program day, which is from 12:00 to either 2:30 or 3:00 p.m., at this time, if everything remains status quo. And, you know, just on a...I guess, on a more personal note, depending on how things kind of shake down from the Federal Government, I would also highly encourage that you guys considering like finding a way to keep Head Start open if the Federal Government is unable to. And it might look different, but just kind of maybe supporting MEO in other forms of childcare because the families that we serve, in particular, really need...really need to work. We all need to work, but they really need to work. These are families that are, you know, low-income families, may be facing various challenges. And so, those extra couple of hours in the day...and for some of these families, like both parents are working, right? And so, yeah, it's...it's hard to encompass everything in three minutes, but just coming from the heart, thank you very much. And please do what you can to keep it going. And it sounds like I have like a little, maybe 30 more seconds. And so, on a separate, like more personal note, I also wanted to express my gratitude. I was here last year, and I wanted to express my gratitude for you guys to earmark the funding for Puniawa Bay. And I do understand that there are some, like I guess red tape at this time, but I was wondering if that's something you guys are continuing to like kind of push it through that we can keep trying for the next fiscal year. And also, just thanks to all of you guys for coming out here. I've gotten really inspired by these meetings. It's really cool to see people come out and speak to what is important to them. And I tell plenty people, like you, should come, it's actually really cool. So, thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Thank you very much. Anybody have questions? Seeing...oh, Member Rawlins-Fernandez.

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COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo for spreading the word about how cool and fun we are, and encourage them to come out and testify, everyone. I just wanted to mahalo everyone for coming out tonight. I have to leave to the airport now, but I mahalo to *Akakū* and Austin. I will be listening to all of your testimony live because of *Akakū*. So, I just wanted to mahalo, mahalo, Councilmember U'u-Hodgins, and mahalo to all of you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. You know, this mic is not working. Is it working --

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Yeah.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: -- this mic? It is? Okay. Next testifier.

MS. NAKATA: Thank you, Chair. The next testifier is Madison Pasion, who will be followed by Cameron Rodgers.

MS. PASION: Do I start now? Okay. Aloha, Councilmembers. My name is Madison Pasion. I'm a student from Maui Waena and as a sixth grader, and I get to be in the STEMworks Program. I go to a lot of STEM nights because my mom works there, and they're really fun. I also got to go to the hospital for...to the hospital for Healthcare Day. I used to think hospitals only had doctors and nurses, but I learned that there are people who do accounting, marketing, and IT work too. I went...I went to a STEM camp called Excite Camp, and we got to go all the way to Hāna for Culture Day. We also went up to Haleakalā and learned about the sun. That made me think maybe one day I could be an astronomer, but that was way too much math. My older brother was in STEMworks too. Now he's an electrical engineer working here on Maui. That makes me proud, and shows me that I could do that too. STEMworks helps me see options that I wouldn't think I could do. I could work in healthcare, or even do something cool like cybersecurity. In my STEMworks after-school media classes, we get to make videos and work with the community. Since I am new, I am still learning a lot of skills. I'm also in eSports, and it's so fun because we get to work as a team, and learn how to think fast. STEMworks has a purpose. It gives us a chance to help our community, even while we're still young. Because Maui is my home, I want to...I want to work here too. I want to work one day...I want to work here one day too. Please keep supporting STEMworks so more kids like me can have these chances too.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Member Paltin.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Madison. I just had one quick question. Did you know that the County of Maui has plenty of cybersecurity vacancies? It's called ITSD. So, that's where you put your application in. And we'll...we'll...we'll snap you right up.

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MS. PASION: I'm really interested in IT right now, so...

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Yeah, that's where the vacancies are.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Thank you very much. Next testifier, please.

MS. NAKATA: Thank you, Chair. The next testifier is Cameron Rodgers, who will be followed by Shay Chan Hodges.

MS. RODGERS: Hi. Thank you so much, everybody, for letting me be here. I am here as a citizen in support of the Maui Economic Development Board, and specifically of the STEMworks Program that has been talked about tonight. I attend these meetings. I've met with some of you personally, and I know you have some really important issues that are facing Maui County that you're trying to solve right now--things like wastewater management, you know, our water crisis, housing development, road safety--all of these things are things that require people who are experts in science, technology, engineering, and math to really solve. And these problems aren't going away. They're going to continue to plague the community. And it's so important to have folks who are familiar with all of the gifts that the community has to offer, and knowing how to use those sustainably, using, again, the best information and education and training. So, again, I'm a huge fan of the STEMworks Program and Maui Economic Development Board. As a citizen, also as a nurse, I have worked in this community for about 15 years as a nurse. Several years, I was short-staffed during that time. I'm happy to say that's not as much of an issue now, but it is probably going to be an issue in the very near future with our aging population. There's some very alarming statistics about the number of nurses that are due to retire from the workforce, and the increase in demand. And so, that's how I became familiar with the STEMworks Program is, part of their initiatives is to try to expose STEM students to the different healthcare positions that are out there and get them excited about healthcare, which again, is so important, so important that when we go to get healthcare, we're taken care of by other community members who really understand where we're coming from, and are passionate about giving us the best care. So, their programming is just amazing, what they do. I got to work with them last year on a program. We just held it for the second time. We had over 200 students who came from the public schools, including from Moloka'i and Lāna'i as well. And we just had it again, 270 students...or 270 participants this year who came and got excited about healthcare. Their programming works, they do data. Last year's event, we saw an 85 percent increased interest in healthcare as a result of the event. We're still getting this year's data. But I know that they come not only to the hospital, they go to other organizations within the community to expose them to the work...potential work opportunities that are out there. As you are all trying to bid these young, brilliant minds into your workforce, I know there's other agencies out there who are doing the same because they are well aware of how important, how much there is a need there. So, it's...it's amazing. I mean, I wish

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I could just follow these...these individuals that work for that, and see what they do because it's tremendous, all of the work they do. So, thank you very much for your time.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Any questions? Seeing none. Next testifier.

MS. NAKATA: Thank you, Chair. The next testifier is Shay Chan Hodges, who will be followed by Nikhilaananda.

MS. HODGES: Aloha. My name is Shay Chan Hodges and I'm testifying as an individual. I'm actually going to talk about three different things, so please forgive me if I have abrupt changes in topics. Number one, I recently joined the board of Nā Leo Pūlama O Maui, which is charged with supporting the construction of a school for Pūnana Leo. For most of the 30 years that I have known the school's director, Kili Namau'u, she has been committed to Pūnana Leo having its own building. Due to a number of factors, the school has not been built, and Pūnana is currently temporarily housed in Christ the King. What has been built is a cultural and linguistic foundation that is vital to our community. We hear and see the deep and broad impacts of Hawaiian language in Maui County every day. I believe Tasha Kama has recommended a line item for Pūnana Leo, and I want to ask that the Council not only support that item, but increase it. Pūnana's primary fundraiser has been Ho'omau for the last 38 years, which raises funds for scholarships and other student-related costs. If the County were to cover those costs on a yearly basis, funds from Ho'omau and other efforts could go toward a building. Number two, speaking of budgets, I think everything...everyone is very aware that we are getting ready to enter what will amount to a second COVID. Various people are losing jobs due to Federal cuts, and tourism will be impacted by a potential recession and international travel concerns. At the same time, many of the billionaires that are participating in creating this economic and political situation own property on Maui. Jeff Bezos purchased property in Mākena for \$78 million. Peter Thiel paid 27 million for his home in Mākena, which was most recently appraised at 42 million. Larry Ellison owns houses and two hotels on Lāna'i. Michael Dell owns the Four Seasons, and Steve Schwarzman is the CEO of Blackstone, which owns the Grand Wailea and Ritz-Carlton, and is therefore the largest private...is therefore the largest private employer in the County. All of these folks work with the current Administration. I strongly recommend that you consider using the power that you have to tax property to recapture the losses that our communities will soon be experiencing. To give an example, Palantir, co-founded by Mr. Thiel, is currently working with DOGE to hack taxpayer names, addresses, Social Security numbers, tax returns, and employment data. While there are only a handful of second homes on Maui appraised at over \$40 million, significant taxes on those few properties could help make up budget shortfalls, and I believe they're currently taxed at approximately 1.2 percent. As Yuki Lei Sugimura recently said on a Facebook post after Congresswoman Tokuda's talk story, we need to fight back. Number three, I know that the County is interested in supporting resilience hubs--totally different

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topic. I just want to make sure that you are aware of the energy-planning work on the West Side spearheaded by Lahaina Strong, and the work of the Upcountry Energy Resilience Project, UERP, in Upcountry, Maui, and the resilience hub work in Kahikinui. The UERP is working with community members to put together a baseline assessment of energy needs and options, and existing energy and resilience projects, as well as to increase energy literacy and to identify priority projects. It is already clear that there is a lot of community interest in resilience hubs, and I hope that however the County chooses to support work in this area, that you would-- . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . almost done--that you ensure that you have surveyed the unique community needs in each region and what other work is already taking place. Sorry for going so fast. Thank you so much for your time, and so much for all of your hard work. Mahalo.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Thank you very much. Any questions for Ms. Hodges? You're my Facebook friend, I guess, huh?

MS. HODGES: I track all of you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: All right. Thank you. Next testifier.

MS. NAKATA: The next testifier is Nikhilananda, he'll be followed by Jerry Isdale.

MR. NIKHILANANDA: Thank you, Maui County Councilmembers, for being here in Pā'ia. My name is Nikhilananda. Also thank you for everybody that's here. I have my yearly laundry list. Number one, remodel the Maui County Council Chambers so Councilmembers do not have their backs to the community. You see how this is set up here? This is the way it...it needs to be. If you look around the country, most governments have it that way. Next, I want to steal what Shay said on my second point. Expand the tiered property tax system, raising property taxes on second, third, fourth homes, and billionaires, and nonresidents. Give a break to residents. Number three, build material reclamation facilities around Maui County. Too much usable items go into the landfill. It will expand the life of the site. Expand the Maui bus system, including Makawao-Pā'ia-Huelo shuttle route. Retire gas buses, and purchase electric hybrid buses to replace them. Institute a residential curbside recycling system, charging per containers. Establish aloha zones for houseless unsheltered, including those living in vehicles, with various social services and personal hygiene facilities. Unlock the Maui County beach park gates. Allow access 24/7. Maintain County park bathrooms, including keeping them open for 24/7. You know what people do if they're locked. Change zoning laws to allow building up a couple of stories for rentals purchased where appropriate, with residential facilities upstairs, and commercial facilities on the first or ground floor. Have more official Maui County government hearings out in the communities, like this one in the evenings, so more residents can attend and testify. Support and work with the State to make Election Day a holiday, while also instituting a ranked choice voting system for all contests. Expand the brightly flashing lights on major road crosswalks. Keep

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expanding and funding pedestrian, bicycle, equestrian trails and paths. Expanded, plus additional County parking lots, in all of the small towns and regions of Maui County. Support additional funding for affordable land trusts. Have more signage in both Hawaiian and English. Continue using nontoxic organic weed spraying, while phasing out all uses of poisonous weed control items. Increase funding for social services provided by the County. Keep pushing and supporting for both the Pā'ia and Lāhainā alternate route projects. And then since 1992, over 30 years, I've been requesting a couple of tennis courts be built at the 4th Marine Park on Kokomo Road in Ha'ikū. There is plenty of space without taking away from other ball fields...now I suggest one tennis and one pickleball court. Times have changed. And my last one--and again, I'm not going to defer to Shay--with a domestic terrorist now serving as President of the United States, there is no guarantee, nor should Maui count on, that any Federal funding will be coming to Maui County. Thank you for your time.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you very much. Any questions?

MR. NIKHILANANDA: And that's Radar (*phonetic*), but I did all the testifying.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you very much.

MR. NIKHILANANDA: Thank you guys.

MS. NAKATA: Thank you, Chair. The next testifier is Jerry Isdale, he'll be followed by Lucienne de Naie.

MR. ISDALE: Aloha, Council. I want to thank you for spending the time. I know you guys sit through hours and hours of Committee, and Budget, and all the other Council activities. Thank you very much. To echo what has been said here before, as a retired engineer, I'm wondering what the impact and what the County has looked at, the sensitivity of our budget to the loss of Federal funding. We know that a lot of it is happening, not just to us as the County, but to a lot of organizations. Head Start's being cut. The STEM programs, our...the ag programs, the transportation authorities, the road monies. A lot of this is up in the air. We get a lot of it from trickle-down through the Federal. And I would encourage you, if you haven't done so already, to take a look at what we're sensitive to, and what services we may lose and have to supply at the County level. Or what groups that you're funding are now going to have not enough budget to run what they're trying to do, and how we might be able to get around that. Again, thank you very much for your work. Good night.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you very much. Any questions? Seeing none. Next testifier, please.

MS. NAKATA: The next testifier is Lucienne de Naie, she'll be followed by Nicole Hokoana.

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MS. DE NAIE: Aloha, and welcome to our...our part of the world. Mahalo to Councilmember U'u-Hodges [sic] for inviting everybody to our community here. I'm testifying on behalf of the Ha'ikū Community Association. My name is Lucienne de Naie, and I'm honored to serve as the president of that association for the past four years. In general, we are very grateful for the support that we have gotten for our area for lots of great projects that we proposed over the year. We're currently doing year two of a water monitoring program, and we're able to let folks who use our popular recreational streams know what the water quality is in those streams, which it does go up and down. It's very interesting, and not just only with storms. We're...we're starting to learn something. It takes a couple years to learn something. We also speak in general support for the funding of all the Staff necessary for our...our County departments to really perform their task effectively. So, this is Police and Fire departments, the Water and Wastewater departments, Department of Housing, Department of Human Concerns, our lifeguards, Department of Agriculture, Departments of Parks and Recreation, East Maui Community Water Authority, and the Department of 'Ōiwi Resources. All of them deserve the...the support to do a good job. So, we're glad to see that there's funding in the budget for all these very needed services. We'd also like to express our gratitude for the \$18.6 million for the Ha'ikū Fire Station. It is...it is coming nearer and nearer, and another few years, it should be here. And also for the funds that had been put in for Mālama Hamakua, Maui, that manages the Hamakualoa Open Space. They've gotten a...a budgetary allotment of \$50,000, which is really helping clean up our communities. Oh, my gosh, people just have all this stuff they would dump otherwise, and they're taking it and putting in rubbish buns...bins because Community Workday, you know, Mālama Maui Nui and Mālama Hamakua are just setting up these places that people can conveniently drop stuff off for the day--not creating trash hubs, but just for the day. Also, Mālama Hamakua is like reclaiming these old pineapple fields. So, if their budget could be boosted up to like 35,000 instead of 25,000, more land could be mowed. There's already a number of acres planted with native plant. Water supply, they've worked out their own water supply. No County water is needed. Very resilient group. We also really want to support others that are key to our security here in Maui, like the...the folks who work with the Maui Invasive Species Council. . . .(timer sounds). . . And we support keeping funding for the 82 acres and Pauwela in that budget, just like you've heard from other folks. We understand there's some title issues, but let's just work through them. And that is part of our community, and it belongs as public land. So, mahalo for your time.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Any questions for Lucienne de Naie? Seeing none.

MS. DE NAIE: You'll get this in writing. It's been sent out tonight too, so --

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Very good.

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MS. DE NAIE: -- you'll have this in writing.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: All right. Next testifier.

MS. NAKATA: The next testifier is Nicole Hokoana, she'll be followed by Michael Du Pont.

MS. HOKOANA: Aloha, County Councilmembers. Thank you for being here tonight to hear from our community. My name is Nicole Hokoana, and I am the CEO for Maui Behavioral Health Resources. I represent three agencies, better known by their 501(c)(3) names--Aloha House, Mālama Family Recovery Center, and Maui Youth and Family Services. Our agencies have provided substance use treatment services since the 1980s, but we also provide homeless outreach, counseling, crisis mobile outreach, case management for severely mentally ill population...and since the wildfires, we've established outreach teams to assist in the recovery, and are active participants in providing healthy, healing resources to the community. Today, I simply want to express my deep gratitude to the County of Maui for supporting all three agencies. Aloha House provides the only licensed detox and residential treatment program here on Maui for low-income individuals. We also have outpatient services, including clean and sober housing that support individuals in long-term recovery. Located off Baldwin Avenue above Pā'ia is the Maui Youth and Family Services residential campus. We have three programs there--a safe house for girls ages 12 to 17 who are victims of crime; a home that we opened after the fires for young adults ages 18 to 26, who are...these adults are aged out of foster care, and there was a need for housing...there still is a need for housing, but so we opened up that program; and soon we're going to open a residential stabilization program for kids experiencing mental health crisis. In Kahului, we have Mālama Family Recovery Center that provides treatment to women, and allows them to be reunified with their children while in program. Mālama is one of two programs in the State that provides gender-specific care to women, and supports them in their parenting. County dollars has supported all of our agencies over the years, including currently the construction of a new dormitory at our Aloha House campus in Makawao. We will break ground in May, so expect to receive an invitation. Our programs represent longstanding critical services that have supported vulnerable members in community for many years, and since the wildfires, additional stressors due to lack of housing, and the increasing cost of living, our agencies have shifted what we do to adapt to the changing landscape. In closing, mahalo Maui...mahalo nui, Maui County Staff and Councilmembers, for being a steadfast partner to us over the years.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you very much. Member Paltin has questions. Oh, and Member Johnson.

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COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Ms. Hokoana. For the three agencies, could you tell me what the ask was, and if you know if it's in the budget as the same?

MS. HOKOANA: Yes. All of them, yes.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Oh, so...

MS. HOKOANA: So, this is just like mahalo.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Oh, okay. So, just keep --

MS. HOKOANA: Yes.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: -- whatever is in there in there?

MS. HOKOANA: Yes.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Okay. Thank you.

MS. HOKOANA: Yeah. Thank you so much.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Member Johnson?

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Okay. Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Ms. Hokoana. It's so good to hear the news about the 12-bedroom dorm.

MS. HOKOANA: Yes.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Man, that's a long journey, but --

MS. HOKOANA: It has been.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: -- we're making it happen. Can you give us an update? I know you said it's going to break ground in May. When is it going to be finished and operating?

MS. HOKOANA: 200 days.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: 200 days?

MS. HOKOANA: Yes. Well, 200 days, the completion of the construction project.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: That's such great news.

MS. HOKOANA: Yeah.

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COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Okay.

MS. HOKOANA: So, we're hoping to get in there and get it done.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Wonderful. Thank you.

MS. HOKOANA: Yeah, thank you. Oh, and I love Head Start, STEM programs, Boys and Girls Clubs. Love all those agencies as well. Mahalo nui.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you very much. Next testifier.

MS. NAKATA: Chair, the next testifier is Michael Du Pont, he'll be followed by Georgia Pinsky.

MR. DU PONT: Aloha, Councilmembers. I'm Michael Du Pont, I'm the Chair, and I have Ana Peterson, which is the Vice-Chair of the Makawao Parade, and all of the events that happen in Makawao Town. We want to give a special thanks to Councilmember U'u-Hodgins and Councilmember Sugimura for always putting in budget for us, and helping us put on all of the exciting activities in Makawao Town. Sorry, I get notes. Okay. So, from the Makawao Parade to the Boo Bash and our vision...and our...sorry, our various town block parties throughout the year, your support, both financial and logistical, has helped keep the heart of Makawao beating strong. These...these events are more than just community gatherings, they celebrate our culture, our paniolo heritage, our families, and the spirit of aloha that makes Upcountry, Maui so special. Because of your investment and partnership, we're able to create safe, inclusive, and joyful experiences for our keiki, kūpuna, and everyone in between. The ripple effect of these events touches our small businesses, our schools, our local nonprofits, and...and helps us sustain a sense of pride and unity in our town. We know that times are challenging, and resources are often limited, so please know that your continued support does not go unnoticed. It's appreciated deeply, not only by us organizers, but everyone who calls Makawao home. Mahalo nui for standing with us, believing in value of community, and helping us keep these traditions alive for generations to come. Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Very good for your enthusiasm, the projects that you do. Anybody have questions? Okay. Thank you very much. Next testifier.

MS. NAKATA: Chair, the next testifier is Georgia Pinsky, she'll be followed by Jill Wirt.

MS. PINSKY: Aloha. Thank you so much for being here this evening, for coming out to Pā'ia Town. I'm here this evening to speak on behalf of the Maui Farmer Support Network. My name is Georgia Pinsky, I'm the co-founder and Executive Director. We're now serving over 75 farmers across the County with our Farmer Navigational Coaching Program, which has been graciously funded by the

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County of Maui for the last three years. We also offer Laulima Days, as Farmer Caprice mentioned earlier, to help our farmers get larger projects done. We are bringing in a new concept this year called Luana Days, which we piloted last summer, and it is a farmer relaxation and mental health day. So, we'll be doing three of those this year. They were funded by Rotary Club. So, really looking forward to doing that. We're going to be partnering with some of our local eco-spa facilities, bringing the farmers in for some mental health tips and strategies, a locally-sourced lunch, and an afternoon enjoying those spa facilities. We're also going to be doing some tool repair workshops and food preservation workshops this year. But the most important thing that we do is to support individual farmers. As Caprice mentioned, as they come out of the back end of the wonderful farmer training programs from GoFarm Hawai'i and from HFUU's FAM program, they're packed full of passion, and knowledge, and excitement, and now what? And when they begin to run the numbers, it's daunting. And so, one of the things that we can help them do in our coaching program is to break apart those obstacles, identify action steps, and just keep them moving forward towards that end goal in pieces that are approachable. Everybody's skillset coming to farming is a little bit different. For most people, it's a second or maybe even third career. My joke these days has become farming is a full-time side hustle, right? Everybody's got a day job, and they're squeezing their agricultural activity in around the sides. The other thing I hear a lot of is, oh, I'm not a farmer. I'm like, okay, you can discredit yourself, but I'm going to give you all the credit I can because you are growing food, you're feeding your family, you're sharing the abundance. However much your abundance is, all is a lot. And so, for me, anybody who is growing food is a farmer, and they deserve all the support we can give. So, mahalo for supporting the Maui Farmer Support Network. We're working on creating this...this spiderweb of support. Somebody told me the other day, you are the mycelium of the small regenerative farming community. I was like, oh, there it is, that's perfect. You know, food is what brings us together, food access is what divides us. And so, as we're seeing these incredible rising food costs, it's more and more important to support our farmers. So, to kind of segue a little bit off of this morning's news about the water shortage, one of the things that I work with our farmers a lot on is engaging in climate-smart ag practices. That could be as simple as applying woodchips for water sequestration, for weed suppression, for soil retention...but it could also be more complex, like gray water de-irrigation, or even installing waterless toileting systems. I know these start to reach over into Department of Health areas, but the more that we can make room in the County codes and policies for these kinds of climate-smart approaches to the problems that we're all facing, the less water we need to be wasting when there are alternatives out there. So, you know, I would like to see Maui County be the model, the exemplary model, of what we see out there at an international level when it comes to water reuse, water preservation. Let's set the pace for how we can move in that direction, away from water going into the sewage treatment plant or into the septic systems --

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MS. NAKATA: Three minutes.

MS. PINSKY: -- when it really could just go through a filtration system and then go onto your, oh, my God, Areca palm hedges. Okay. So, we can move in that direction. I would love to talk with you guys about some of the climate-smart practices that my farmers would like to engage with that are currently prohibited either by County, State, or Federal statutes. Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Thank you very much. Member Sinenci has a question.

COUNCILMEMBER SINENCI: Mahalo, Ms. Pinsky, for your testimony, and mahalo for always advocating for farmers apprentice programs. I was just curious, what is your annual operating budget?

MS. PINSKY: We're hoping for an annual operating budget of 300,000. And I say hoping because we're not quite there yet, but the demand for the services we're providing is ever-increasing, and that's what we would need to meet that current demand.

COUNCILMEMBER SINENCI: Thank you.

MS. PINSKY: Yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER SINENCI: Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you very much. Nice to see you.

MS. PINSKY: Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Next testifier.

MS. NAKATA: Thank you, Chair. The next testifier is Jill Wirt, she'll be followed by Ashley Moody.

MS. WIRT: Aloha, Councilmembers. I just want to acknowledge everyone in the room right now. I am super impressed with all of the programs that are going on in Maui County, and thank you all for your time tonight. I'm here testifying on behalf of Maui Nui Marine Resource Council. And before I go into my ask, I just want to walk through what I've done in the last week for MNMRC, and...and why we need this funding for environmental and marine conservation. A week ago, I spoke about our Reef-Friendly Landscaping Program, which is the first of its kind in Hawai'i, to the Rotary Club in South Maui. The next day, I was diving with my coworkers doing coral reef surveys in South Maui. On Friday, we delivered park benches for another grant to Kahoma Village in Lāhainā. We're revitalizing their green space over there as part of the post-fire recovery process. Let's see. Monday, we were sampling limu along the North Shore of Maui for nitrogen

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isotope testing. And then today, I was back out at Kahoma Village, flagging for the trees that are going in in that community. So, we do a variety of different programs--water quality monitoring; reef-friendly landscaping, as I mentioned; we just implemented our first coral restoration site in South Maui as well. We're currently in the budget for 225,000, and I respectfully ask for an increase to 525,000. Those programs are supporting the 41 water quality monitoring sites across leeward Maui, reef surveys, education and outreach, and then, of course, a portion of it goes towards our staff salaries as well. I have the numbers for those program outbreaks if you're curious. But thank you all so much for your support. As we know, and people have mentioned, Federal funding is becoming more and more unreliable in conservation work. County funding not only supports our programs, but also provides a very reliable match in order for us to apply for larger grants, and for us to expand our work and grow on the programs and conservation work that we're doing. We just need that extra support. So, thank you so much for everything, and happy to answer any questions.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Anybody have questions? Seeing none. Can you have...can we have a copy of your testimony?

MS. WIRT: Yes.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. All right. Next testifier.

MS. NAKATA: Chair, the next testifier is Ashley Moody. She'll be followed by Desilee Santiago.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: How many more testifiers do we have? I wonder if we should take a little break. Pause for the cause. Ten more testifiers. Members, do you want to do ten more, or you want to take a break?

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: We can let her go, and then we can take a recess.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Okay. You want to take a break? Okay. After you, we'll take a little break after you. Thank you.

MS. MOODY: Thank you. I'm Ashley Moody. I work with Grow Some Good, and I'm the Farm-to-School Manager. I'm really thankful to be here with you tonight. I'm really thankful for your continued support that we've had for the past several years with Grow Some Good. Today, I'm here to advocate for your continued support. As many of you know, our nonprofit works with schools across Maui, providing garden-based, hands-on agricultural education. We believe that nurturing a connection to the land and access to local healthy food not only enriches the education and health of our keiki today, but also supports a sustainable future for Maui. We work primarily in elementary education. And so, today, we've got to meet a lot of youth that are part of STEM and wanting to be...you know, also the...the Farmers Network that's here on Maui. And so,

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starting young, we're kind of planting the seed into the students' experience about learning about the land, learning about food, learning about what health feels like. And most of the funding goes to our...to our farm-to-school side of Grow Some Good. And so, we work in seven schools across Maui. This year, we expanded to go to King Kamehameha III and Princess Nāhi'ena'ena on the West Side. And these schools have been really foundational also for students coming back to school after the...after the fires, especially at King Kamehameha III, and offering them also an outdoor place for healing and connection to land. This funding not only supports our staff at schools across Maui, but we also are part of a larger Hawai'i Farm-to-School Network, which we do the Maui Farm-to-School Network. And so, we give resources to schools across Maui, to schools on Moloka'i and Lāna'i if...if they desire them, and we represent Maui as part of the larger Hawai'i Farm-to-School Network. We have Kumu Mea Kanu garden kits that are accessible to any school on Maui. So, that's public schools, private schools, and basically their online curriculum that grew out of COVID. And so, if a school doesn't have a school garden, they get a video kit with six to eight lessons where they get all of the materials, so they can start plants in the...in their classroom, and the teachers don't have to do any extra works [sic]. There's video lessons and lesson outlines and workbooks, and the County funding directly supports that program. We also offer intersession afterschool programs and field trip supports...support with the YMCA, Big Brother, Big Sisters, and this year we expanded to be with Maui Nui Botanical Garden. We continued a collaboration with the Hawai'i Farm-to-School Hui, and hosted a We Grow event this year, and this is with high schoolers across Hawai'i Nei. So, this year, we hosted...it's the We Grow Part 1, which was actually in Lāhainā. And so, youth from . . . (timer sounds). . . across the islands came, listened to community, and then later went back to the capitol and learned about advocacy, and how to get policies going through...going through the capitol. So, I just want to thank you for your support, and just thank you for your time. And yeah, we hope to continue having the support of the County budget, which has been \$150,000, and would continue as that which is proposed.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Can we have a copy of your testimony?

MS. MOODY: Yes.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Okay. Very good. Who has a question? Member Johnson has a question for you.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: And Member Paltin.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Thank...thank you so much for what you do. I really appreciate that. I love the Grow...Grow Some Good program. I've got a question.

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I'm really curious. When you guys grow, let's say for example, papaya, do you...do you give it to the cafeteria and they serve it to the kids, or do you give it to the kids and they take it home? How does that work?

MS. MOODY: Every program is different. So, I mean, they have to go through like an allergy list with their school to make sure the students can eat the food. But generally, it's happening in garden class. So, our garden coordinators have to go through a process of like how to serve the...the food properly to the students. But currently farm-to-school through Grow Some Good, we're not working directly with cafeterias. That's --

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Yeah.

MS. MOODY: -- a bit more of a challenge. They...

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: I've had farmers --

MS. MOODY: Yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: -- trying to get into the school cafeteria, and they just say it's a nightmare. So, I was wondering maybe Grow Some Good had a way around it, but it seems like it's a nightmare. Okay.

MS. MOODY: It's...it's in the vision long-term. It hasn't...it hasn't happened yet.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Okay.

MS. MOODY: I think it's a challenge on school cafeterias having to get contracts with agricultural providers, and they have to be able to --

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Yeah.

MS. MOODY: -- provide a consistent amount of food over time.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Thank you.

MS. MOODY: Yeah.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Okay. Thank you very much.

MS. MOODY: Yeah. Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you for your testimony. And Members, I'm going to take a ten-minute break. So, it is now 7:33, 7...7:43...7:45. . . .(gavel). . .

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RECESS: 7:33 p.m.

RECONVENE: 7:51 p.m.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: . . .*(gavel)*. . . Can you hear us? You can hear us? Okay. Very good. So, welcome back to the Budget, Finance, Economic Development Committee. It is now ten to 8:00, and we will continue on with our...our budget meeting. But I wanted, first of all, Member U'u-Hodgins to introduce her Staff. I forgot to ask her in the beginning. Awesome people.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: That's because my Staff doesn't really want to be introduced all the time, but that's okay. We'll do it anyway since the room is a bit cleared out. So, we have Susan in the back in teal...yay. We have Kainoa sitting next to her in gray. We have Jade standing up back there in magenta. And we have Buddy in the aloha blue shirt helping on the mic.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Awesome, awesome.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Okay. So, any more announcements? No? Take it away.

MS. NAKATA: Thank you, Chair. The next testifier is Desilee Santiago, she'll be followed by Charen Kepler.

MS. SANTIAGO: Good evening, everybody. My name is Desilee Santiago. I just want to note, my name is on that building right across from the gas station, just FYI, rep Pā'ia. I currently live in Ha'ikū. We were illegally evicted. I was in Hāli'imaile for like 11-and-a-half years, but we are now residing in Ha'ikū. So, I am currently a member of the Maui Tenant and Workers Association, but I am here representing them, as well as myself, and my 'ohana. Our County is facing a lot of uncertainty as of late, specifically in regards to our Federal funding. I'm asking that we not cut our budget, specifically any budget that would affect our community in any way as far as rental assistance, housing assistance, anything that's going to harm our local community here, our working class, our low-income, you know, everybody here, because we are all struggling and trying to make it together. By reducing the current budget for any reason other than cutting waste, you are reducing assistance and services that service all of our communities here. Rent is too high, and households are struggling to make ends meet. There's wastewater, water, and electricity proposed increases in the near future, which we're already struggling to pay. Let's see. Sorry, I have like so many notes in here. Why are we allowing rent gouging to continue? \$2,000 for a 400-square-foot, one-bedroom apartment at Kaulana Mahina, and that is just the base rent, doesn't include parking and utilities. Can you imagine housing that is not considered affordable housing? It's \$4,000 and up for a three-bedroom

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home, with...sometimes it's with water. There's no electricity. You still got to pay electricity. It's like 3, 4, \$500. I just went to Costco. I spent \$800 on what? I have no idea, right? Milk, eggs, snacks, noodles, chicken--all the regular necessities--and it's...you know, it's...it's killing all of us here. The...the Governor's proclamation, although it has lifted the eviction moratorium, it hasn't removed the condition that the landlords cannot raise the rent. So, the problem is, is that the Attorney General's Office is not enforcing this. They allow corrective measures. So, they get reported, the violation is there. They say, hey, what about this violation? And then they go, oh, I'm sorry, we never know. So, they remove the violation in corrective measures, and then that person that, you know, obviously reported them to Attorney General's Office gets the boot. So, where does that leave? That's why people aren't speaking up. People aren't, you know, reporting any wrongdoing that's happening to them and their families because we have nowhere to go. County vacancies related to Maui being too expensive. Hello, we live and work here and can't afford to pay our basic living expenses, yet you're raising salaries for positions to look attractive to outside residents instead of incentivizing our own residents to continue to stay here, taking away the opportunities for us who have already been working in whatever department or job, the opportunity to make more money to supply for our families because...the position descriptions, right? We got to go back to DPS. I'm so sorry, I'm not. The DPS staff, they've always been nice to me. Every time I've talked to them, they've always been very helpful, but it's not helpful when we cannot even qualify for the own jobs that we are actually doing, right? County vacancies due to outdated position descriptions. Most PDs don't even exist in the current positions. It's from the '90s.

MS. NAKATA: Three minutes, 30 seconds.

MS. SANTIAGO: What happened to the recruitment and retention study? I don't...I...you know, I know I testified at that. We paid Brandcrafters LLC \$150,000 for this study. I want to know kind of what...you know, what was the...the product? What was the end result? What did they say? What's happening with that...with that whole program? Property taxes. Do we have a vacant tax? I know real property was talking about vacant tax.

MS. NAKATA: Four minutes.

MS. SANTIAGO: Non-Owner Occupied should be taxed higher, and continued exemptions for long-term renter and owner-occupied. Mahalo.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: So, maybe you can submit to us your testimony in writing if you want.

MS. SANTIAGO: I'll clean it up. I'll clean it up.

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CHAIR SUGIMURA: Oh, okay. Any questions? Member Johnson has a question for you.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Thank you, Ms. Santiago, for your testimony. You...you have some really good points because a lot of people are suffering. The ALICE community--Access-Limited, Income-Constrained and Employed--those kind of folks that just can't make ends meet. So, to clarify, would you support the County giving out money to the Maui United Way, 15 million, to help support...pay for rent, utilities, food, gas, school supplies, dental, and other basic essentials?

MS. SANTIAGO: I would. I...I feel like sometimes when people apply, the application process is so...it's...people can't even apply for a building permit, you know, online. They can't even register for an account. Like people are struggling with even the application process, which is...which discourages them to apply even at all, right? I think just the requirements are way too strict.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Have you ever worked with the Maui United Way at all?

MS. SANTIAGO: I have not, personally.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Okay. I hear good things, because I hear --

MS. SANTIAGO: Okay.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: -- I also hear that same thing, that the paperwork burdens --

MS. SANTIAGO: Yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: -- people so much. So...

MS. SANTIAGO: I think just every...you know, in general, just applying for anything, it's --

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Yeah.

MS. SANTIAGO: -- you know, filling out the same information over and over again. When my son got Kaulana Mahina, that application packet was this thick.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Yeah.

MS. SANTIAGO: For a 23-year-old, you know what I mean? It's like...and it...it was the same information over and over, and they're over there with papers sprawled out. So, I mean, they did it, and they got it. God bless that they...you know, I'm...we're grateful that they did, but now they're struggling. You know, they're

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making...one's making \$18 an hour, the other one's making \$20 an hour, can barely make this 20...\$2,000 a month, plus utilities, plus parking, plus gas, plus, you know, food.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: That sounds like that program would help somebody like that.

MS. SANTIAGO: I would hope so.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Okay. Thank you so much.

MS. SANTIAGO: Yeah. Thank you.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Thank you very much.

MS. SANTIAGO: Thanks.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Next testifier.

MS. NAKATA: Chair, the next testifier is Charen Kepler, who will be followed by Cassi Yamashita.

MS. KEPLER: Aloha, Council. Thank you so much for giving us the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Charen Kepler. I am the Executive Director for Ka Ipu Kukui. It's a leadership development program aimed at helping emerging leaders within Maui County. And I'm here today to request your support for the Mayor's budget item for Ka Ipu Kukui. It will support the Adult Fellows Program and our Stay Maui Nui Youth Program. And I just want to say thank you so much for past support and funding as well. You know, Ka Ipu Kukui has become known as a proven catalyst for community change. Since its inception in 2007, we've graduated 2...219 fellows, and 15 more graduating in May. You'll be getting an invitation later this week for that. And I'm so proud to share that a vast majority of our alumni continue to live and work right here in Maui County, or in the State of Hawai'i. Our program has a track record of producing leaders who make a tangible difference in our community. This includes current County Councilmembers, numerous fellows working in the County, several are working tonight right now in the room. We have so many nonprofit executive directors, CEOs, and project directors, like Jill Wirt earlier from the Maui Nui Resource Council. Countless community-driven business owners and leaders. You know, fellows serve on boards, commissions, and are at the forefront of addressing the key challenges that we have heard about tonight from many of our community members...you know, those things like affordable housing and economic diversification, culture and conservation. And you know that we cover so much more than that. The Stay Maui Nui Youth Program, while

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it complements the Ka Ipu Kukui Adult Program, is designed to help high school students from across Maui County explore career pathways, and gain mentorship networking opportunities so that they feel that they are wanted and can contribute to our local economy. By offering career exploration and leadership development opportunities, we are helping to combat the brain drain and the out-migration. And that leadership development is centered around all kinds of career paths. We've heard them tonight--ag, healthcare, STEM, government, conservation--we try to cover it all. And we do it very specifically on the students that are in the program at the time. Our programs directly align with the goals of our County's future. As the need for strong local leadership grows, we continue to ensure that our graduates are well prepared to take on these high-impact roles that serve the betterment of our entire community. Each year, our fellows go through and learn about the community organizations, and they play an integral part in building a sustainable and resilient future for Maui. Your support in this line item means a lot to us, and we will continue to address these critical issues, and continue to provide these life-changing opportunities to our citizens that will have a wide impact on our future. With your help, we can cultivate the next generation of leaders . . . *(timer sounds)* . . . right here on Maui, providing them the tools and resources they need to preserve and grow our island home. And I just want to throw in, I really want to personally, and as well as behalf of Ka Ipu Kukui, support MEO, who is our transportation for the youth program, and MEDB, who used to be our fiscal sponsor, we are our own 501(c)(3) now, but they have helped us with our Project Maui Nui, which used to be Project Weekend, which is a hackathon on very specific topics that we face, and we've been...our recent topics have been a resilient Maui. So, thank you so much for your time and consideration. I'm open for questions.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. I think Ka Ipu Kukui's in the budget for 45,000; is that right?

MS. KEPLER: I think it's 47,500.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: 47,500. Oh, okay. Any questions? None. Thank you.

MS. KEPLER: Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Next testifier.

MS. NAKATA: Thank you, Chair. The next testifier is Cassi Yamashita, she'll be followed by Dan Ellis.

MS. YAMASHITA: Hi.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Hi, Cassi.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: She's tall.

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MS. YAMASHITA: Aloha, good evening, everybody, Councilmembers, Staff. Thank you guys all for being here and listening to all of us. My purpose for being here tonight is just a mahalo. I am the Community...Community Services Director for MEO. So, I oversee about 14 programs in my department, 4 of which are County-funded. Those programs specifically are the B.E.S.T. program, Being Empowered and Safe Together. So, there is the reentry program. I just wanted to share some stats so that you guys can be aware of the work that is being done through your support. We are currently at 144 individuals served through that program. Our goal for the year is 150. Our rental assistance program, we have served 128 households out of the 150 goal so far...that's 339 individuals through that program. Our women's reentry program is a housing assistance, childcare, and utilities assistance program for women coming out of incarceration. And so far, we've served 40 out of 50 women in that program. Enlace Hispano, we've served 279 individuals through that program. And that program is a program specifically serving our Spanish-speaking community. And this year, a huge focus has been on ESL classes and citizenship classes. Yeah. They're a huge part of our community. They want to be involved, they want to contribute. And programs like this help us to support them. And then finally, everyone's love program, PNCC, our kūpuna program. And this year, we have served 1,571 kūpuna. In the beginning of the program year, we had 52 clubs...now we have 68. And in the last quarter, I believe we had enrolled over 200 new kūpuna, so it's in...in the last three months. So, just showing you how that program has evolved and is growing. And then just this year, I just wanted to say also, mahalo, we had the workforce...sorry, Maui displaced workforce development program, where we were able to continue or extend services for our Maui disaster resource dislocated worker program. And through that, we've been able to support 23 host sites, all working in disaster relief efforts. And we've...we have been able to support 43 individuals in their continuation of that support. So, just a mahalo, thank you guys for everything you do.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Any questions? Thank you very much. Next testifier.

MS. NAKATA: Chair, the next testifier is Dan Ellis, he'll be followed by Moi Kawaakoa.

MR. ELLIS: Good evening. My name is Dan Ellis. I'm here on behalf of myself. I'm here to support the Maui Economic Development Board's Economic Development Grant under the Maui County's Office of Economic Development, along with the other critical work they're doing. And I've heard a lot of talk about the STEM programs, and it seems that they are integral in so many things, but they're also helping us to restore the Pā'ia Sugar Mill, which is...with the goal of bringing back diversified manufacturing jobs and opportunities back to Pā'ia for local working people. This essential sort of legacy of community for everybody can continue on Maui and once again thrive. As for the Pā'ia Sugar Mill, generations of working families were supported and able to thrive from...from that...from that site. And with the help of MEDB and others, and the work that we're putting in, we're going

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to be able to once again make it an asset for Pā'ia, and for all of the people that live here. So, thanks to MEDB for their support. And I really also want to say thanks for your guys' support because it's...it's a lot of work, and there's a lot of opportunity here on Maui for...for us to, you know, come together and use these...all these problems that we have, and find really good solutions that we can then take out to the world and show them that this little island can support working people, and can support community, and...and be a beacon for that. So, thank you very much.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you for testifying. Any questions? Seeing none.

MR. ELLIS: Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Next testifier.

MS. NAKATA: The next testifier is Moi Kawaakoa, who will be followed by Marie Rhea Bjarson [sic].

MS. KAWAAKOA: Aloha mai. Mahalo for having me. My name is Moi Kawaakoa, I am the Po'ō of Holomua Outreach, if you don't know. I am the Homeless Outreach Service Provider in the North Shore area, Pā'ia to Maliko, with the aspirations to service all of Maui, and all of Upcountry. I come here today to ask for your support in funding our work development program. This is a way to get our people in a more stable place before getting housing, and also using cultural practices as a form of recovery and healing. We have partnered with a Pā'ia business owner, where our people will be helping her make lei for her florist shop . . . (timer sounds). . . , to give to our graduates and...and certain spaces in Pā'ia and Kihei. And we also kind of created service programs to remove trash from the homeless community that we help on Holomua Road. We have created a photo ID program. We have two alaka'i from the Holomua community that help with donations to serve our people from Pā'ia to Maliko. They also help pass out hot meals. They also help with showers and laundry where we partner with Maui Rescue Mission. They provide showers and laundry on Holomua Road, and we help them...we assist them with that, and we also help our community by passing out donations, and partner with other community partners like Mālama I Ke Ola, MEMA, Hawai'i Community Assets--many others that have come and gone--Goodwill Hawai'i. Just trying to uplift our people and fill in those gaps where we can as the grassroots outreach provider. So, we're asking for 75,000 to help support our work development program. We have submitted our budget to Gabe Johnson, Councilmember Johnson. We have also submitted a six-month long-term or short-term proposal to Councilmember Sinenci to also form benefit corporations to help uplift our people with jobs that are needed to help take care of the community. So, yeah . . . (inaudible). . .

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you very much.

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MS. KAWAAKOA: Mahalo.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you very much. Any questions? Member Paltin has a question.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you, Chair. Sorry, thank you, Ms. Kawaakoa. What was the amount for the benefit corporation ask?

MS. KAWAAKOA: The benefit for that is 467,500. These three B...or benefit corporations are a hot meal food truck to give hot meals all over the Upcountry area, and also using our community members and a skilled, you know, head kitchen chef. And the trash removal program, to help remove trash in our homeless encampments, but also be a service to our kūpuna, our single moms, people that don't have that capacity to remove their 'ōpala. And also, to remove abandoned vehicles from homeless encampments, and offer that service to our public community, our other community at a low price, you know, just to help us sustain the programs, and not just take your guys' money.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Okay. So, the hot meal, trash removal, and abandoned vehicle removal?

MS. KAWAAKOA: 'Ae. That's just one of the...that's just three of a lot, but yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you.

MS. KAWAAKOA: Yeah.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you.

MS. KAWAAKOA: Aloha.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Member Johnson?

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Thank you, Chair. And thank you, Moi, for what you do for this community. I know you touch a lot of lives, and thank you for that.

MS. KAWAAKOA: Mahalo.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: My...my question is for the workforce development, \$75,000. Will the workforce development help them get off the streets?

MS. KAWAAKOA: Yes. I already started paying two of my alaka'i with small grants that I've received, and the first thing they said was, oh, babe, now we can get one house. Now we can get our driver's license. Now we can clear those fines that are holding them back from getting that driver's license. So, it is making an impact when we present these work development programs

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COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: For the work development program, you're thinking trade schools, you're thinking...can you give us --

MS. KAWAAKOA: Yes.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: -- an example of something?

MS. KAWAAKOA: So, you know, even partnering with businesses that already...you know, that already established --

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Yeah.

MS. KAWAAKOA: -- like Pā'ia Florist, she's offering our people to help make leis --

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Yeah.

MS. KAWAAKOA: -- and also work at her Plumeria farm. You know, it doesn't need to benefit Holomua Outreach. It benefits our people --

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Yeah.

MS. KAWAAKOA: -- in the long run. And they're getting their recovery and healing through doing that nā mea, putting all of that nā mea and...and their essence, their...their na'au into what they doing, and talking about what they...why they ended up there in the first place.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Yeah.

MS. KAWAAKOA: Yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Thank you for that. I know quite often, we...a lot of small businesses, even the big businesses are telling me they can't find workers. And you could be that missing link that connects these communities, that both can help each other. So, thank you so much. Thank you, Chair.

MS. KAWAAKOA: Yeah. So, if you have...if you need help, come reach out to me, Holomua Outreach, and we have people ready and willing to help. Mahalo.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Thank you. Next testifier.

MS. NAKATA: The next testifier is Marie Rhea Bjarson, who will be followed by Maile Davis. Marie Rhea Bjarson? Apologies if I've mispronounced it. It's B-J-A-R-S-O-N. Marie Rhea Bjarson?

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Okay. Maybe next.

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MS. NAKATA: The next testifier is Maile Davis.

MS. DAVIS: Hi. Thank you. I'm so glad I got to sit for so long and sit in my horribleness of speaking publicly. I'm here with Mālama Hamakua Maui--I'm so impressed that everybody didn't use their notes because I always feel like I need to--but Mālama Hamakua Maui, which is a nonprofit, and we oversee the Hamakua Open Space Preserve that the County is in charge of. And I'm here to thank you for your funding and support, but also ask for a little bit more. I was here earlier...or last year, with the Mayor's Office, and I did ask for 35,000. Very, very grateful for the 25,000, but let me tell you how we use that. We're in charge of the 300 acres, and we have removed...this year we have tagged 15 cars for removal. And just for example, last October, we removed one-and-a-half tons of waste in one workday with volunteers. So, we do monthly workdays with volunteers, and we clean out generational waste, and also current illegal dumping. And so, we're looking for a little bit more support to be able to do that. We partner with a lot of different County offices, such as Nohe's office, Parks and Rec, Public Works, Planning Department, and on and on and on. Recently, we've been waiting for the County to complete their cultural assessment, which is actually like four to five years overdue, but we're very patient. We are coming to an end on that. And so, in the middle of facilitating the cultural assessment, once it's done, we'll be able to get in and do a little bit more work, help conserve our conservation areas. And also, we've been working with MISC because there's been fire ants and coqui frog discovered in the area. So, we facilitate all of that cleanup in that area. And then on the top of that, we would like to thank you for the \$50,000 line item. And that is purely for removing the cars and the trash. So, we don't make any money off of that. We just rent dumpsters. And we were able to move that out into the community twice this year. It was a little bit of a slow start, but now that we're going, we opened it up kind of like how Lāhainā does the community workdays with Mālama Maui Nui. And within two hours of our first one at Door of Faith Road, we collected over 250 tires, 25 appliances, and a whole 30-foot roll-off bin of metal. And then the same was similar last week at the Ha'ikū Community Center. So, we have been using those funds, hopefully, as they were intended, and help for the...helpful for the community. And so, we ask for your continued support, and thank you for what you've already given. I do want to mention that we do fundraise on our own. So, we are able to leverage your County grants and make twice to sometimes three times . . . *(timer sounds)*. . . that amount in a year as we're waiting for a lease. Right now we just have a right-of-entry. Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Thank you. No questions.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Thank you, Maile.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you, Maile. Next testifier.

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MS. NAKATA: Chair, the last person who has signed up to testify tonight is Tania Hansen.

MS. HANSEN: Aloha. I'm short. Can I touch the...oh, easy. Hi. Thank you so much. My name is Tania. I'm...I'm...we're actually...I'm from Maui Rescue Mission. My husband and I have...we run Maui Rescue Mission. For anybody who doesn't know, it's...what everybody sees Maui Rescue Mission doing is a portable personal care trailer that we take around the island. We don't receive County funds. We should probably change that, but I'm here mostly just to say thank you for the...for any support that you are giving to all of our partner organizations. We link arms with a lot of grassroots orgs on Maui. And since the fires, of course, as you can imagine, we've seen a great influx in our outreaches around the island, sometimes even double the number of people that we were serving. So, as we enter this crazy Federal climate with all of these cuts happening, and this rhetoric from the Federal Government, essentially villainizing and criminalizing the homeless, you can imagine how much more need there's going to just grow here on Maui. So, I thank you for the amount of support that you give the grassroots organizations that are out there serving the most vulnerable among us, and also to invite you to come and volunteer on our outreaches, and connect with the community. Our goal is to build a bridge between the houseless and the unhoused. We truly believe that the way forward is to break down the barrier that says us and them, and for investment in this community, and in the services that are most-needed, most basic services are worthwhile because they contribute to the health of our community as a whole. And may those investments of...of time and heart posture be something that is just a natural outflowing of how we care for our community without the wall there...you know, they're over there, and a problem to be solved, a pest to be eliminated. Instead, breaking down those barriers and making it so that we can care for our community in a more holistic way. So, thank you. We currently...as far as I know, we're the only guys out there giving showers and laundry. We definitely are seeing a growth in the need. And there's lots of us out here doing the work. And we just need your support, not only financially, but that dialogue that's so important. People ask me, what's the biggest challenge, what's the biggest obstacle? And it's definitely the obstacle of public opinion that spills over into public policy. And so, if we can change that dialogue, if...from...from up above --

MS. NAKATA: Three minutes.

MS. HANSEN: -- the community is seeing from you guys that this is something worthwhile, it's a community worth investing in and loving, and helping, then that makes our job a lot easier too. So, thank you so much.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you for what you do.

MS. HANSEN: Thank you.

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CHAIR SUGIMURA: A question for you from Member Paltin.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Ms. Hansen. I was wondering the trailer, is it one trailer that has showering, hygiene, and washing in the same trailer?

MS. HANSEN: Yes.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: How much do one of those run?

MS. HANSEN: We...the new one that we just got through a World Vision grant was...I'm going to ballpark it, I'm going to say it was about 150,000.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Wow. And how many loads of laundry can it do at one time?

MS. HANSEN: We have...in that trailer, we have four washing units. There's no way we can possibly...like we can...we can do in one of our four-hour outreaches, you know, about probably maximum 15 to 20 loads, which is not anywhere close to the need, obviously.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: And they're kind of small capacity? Because...

MS. HANSEN: No. They're full size...thank God, they're full size. And sometimes we really jam them in. Because, you know, sometimes folks are waiting a long time to get that one shower, that one load of laundry. So, we do our best, we just need more. And we do have two trailers, we just need more staff.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Where are the trailers usually situated?

MS. HANSEN: Where they park?

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Yeah.

MS. HANSEN: Like where they sleep at night is at...

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Or where do they outreach to?

MS. HANSEN: Oh, the outreaches are...we have one at Kanaha Beach Park, Cut Mountain, which is a really big outreach now that replaced our Lāhainā outreach. We work with Holomua Outreach on Fridays, and St. Theresa in Kihei.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: So, then it carries all the water with it --

MS. HANSEN: Yeah.

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COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: -- you don't need to --

MS. HANSEN: Yes, it's...

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: -- hook up?

MS. HANSEN: Yeah, it's contained.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: And then when you fill the water, where do you fill the water from?

MS. HANSEN: Kahului Baptist, I'm pretty sure, is where we get water.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: And have you applied to the grant program with the County before?

MS. HANSEN: We haven't.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Oh. How come?

MS. HANSEN: I know...I don't know.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: There's plenty to be determined homeless...or houseless solutions section that they haven't...oh, I guess we could proviso possibly.

MS. HANSEN: Awesome. Yeah, no, honestly, we...I...I honestly have never looked into it, but we can change that. But...

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Okay.

MS. HANSEN: Thank you.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you.

MS. HANSEN: Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you very much. Last testifier?

MS. NAKATA: Chair, no one else has signed up to testify. If there's anyone else who would like to testify, please approach the mic and identify yourself, and then complete the form later. Chair, seeing no one approaching.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Okay. All right. So, at this time, then, Members, I want to thank you all for spending your evening with us. Thanks for sharing all the special things that you do in the community to make Maui County as awesome as it is.

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And we look forward to seeing you again. Come visit us at the budget, at the Chambers anytime, or call our Councilmembers. We're willing to help and anxious to talk to you. But at this time then, Members, this meeting is now adjourned.

MS. NAKATA: Excuse me, Chair. Would you like to close public testimony?

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Oh, I guess so, yeah. We're going to close public testimony, with your permission.

. . . CLOSE PUBLIC TESTIMONY . . .

COUNCILMEMBERS VOICED NO OBJECTIONS. (excused: AL, KRF)

ACTION: DEFER pending further discussion.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: And it is now 8:26, and this meeting is now adjourned.
...*(gavel)*...

ADJOURN: 8:26 p.m.

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Transcribed by: Daniel Schoenbeck

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CERTIFICATION

I, Daniel Schoenbeck, hereby certify that pages 1 through 45 of the foregoing represents, to the best of my ability, a true and correct transcript of the proceedings. I further certify that I am not in any way concerned with the cause.

DATED the 12th day of May 2025, in Wailuku, Hawai'i



Daniel Schoenbeck