

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

**MINUTES**

**April 11, 2024**

**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

**CONVENE:** 6:01 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Councilmember Yuki Lei K. Sugimura, Chair  
Councilmember Tasha Kama, Vice-Chair  
Councilmember Tom Cook, Member  
Councilmember Gabe Johnson, Member  
Councilmember Alice L. Lee, Member  
Councilmember Tamara Paltin, Member  
Councilmember Keani N.W. Rawlins-Fernandez, Member (In at 6:27 p.m.)  
Councilmember Shane M. Sinenci, Member

**EXCUSED:** Councilmember Nohelani U'u-Hodgins, Member

**STAFF:** Ellen McKinley, Legislative Analyst  
Stacey Vinoray, Committee Secretary  
Jennifer Yamashita, Committee Secretary  
Richelle Kawasaki, Deputy Director  
Ryan Martins, Council Ambassador

**Additional staff**

Executive Assistants for Councilmember Tom Cook:

Jared Agtunong  
Stacy Takahashi

Executive Assistant for Councilmember Gabe Johnson:

Axel Beers

Executive Assistants for Councilmember Shane M. Sinenci:

Don Atay  
Gina Young

Executive Assistant for Councilmember Keani N.W. Rawlins-Fernandez:

Sarah Sexton

Residency Area Office (RAO):

Bill Snipes, Council Aide, South Maui Residency Area Office

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**OTHERS:** Sheena Bellavance  
Richard Pounds  
Gertrudes Holder, Health Insurance Enrollment Coordinator, Maui AIDS Foundation  
Linda Puppolo, Executive Director, Maui AIDS Foundation  
Nālani Kaninau  
Randy Wagner, Board Member, Kihei Community Association  
Joan Martin  
Tom Blackburn-Rodriguez  
Matthew Lugo  
Ron Vioria  
Tiare Sua, Director of Prevention and Education, Maui Aids Foundation  
Adele Rugg  
Anna Merritt, Head Start Family Services Manager, Maui Economic Opportunity, Inc.  
Sean Yannell  
Cristina De Leon, Teran James Young Foundation  
ReneAl Dumarán  
Kelly King  
Elaine Malina  
DiAnn Colton  
Lisa Labrecque, Chief Executive Officer, Maui Humane Society  
Connie Pluchos  
Will Spence  
Max Tornai  
Peter Trunk  
Eli Wynne  
Susan Thomson  
Zandra Amaral Crouse

Others (22)

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

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**ITEM 1: PROPOSED FISCAL YEAR 2025 BUDGET FOR THE COUNTY OF MAUI** (BILL 60 (2024), BILL 61 (2024), BILL 62 (2024), BILL 63 (2024), BILL 64 (2024), and RESOLUTION 24-66)

CHAIR SUGIMURA: . . .*(gavel)*. . . Good evening, everybody. Welcome to the Budget, Finance, and Economic Development Committee. It is now 6:01, and we're so glad to be here. Thank you very much for opening up your community to allow

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us to hear what your concerns are. We are the Maui County Council. I'm the Chair of this Committee. My name is Yuki Lei Sugimura and I'm going to ask your Councilmember Tom Cook to introduce the rest of the Councilmembers.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Aloha, everybody. Can you hear in the back? It's all good? So, I'd like to introduce to my right, Councilmember Shane Sinenci from Hāna, and . . . *(applause in background)*. . . Nohelani U'u-Hodgins from Pā'ia district is not here this evening, she's with her parents...with her children. And then, Tamara Paltin from West Maui. . . *(applause in background)*. . . Budget Chair, Yuki Lei Sugimura from Upcountry. . . *(applause in background)*. . . Council Chair Alice Lee from Wailuku. . . *(applause in background)*. . . Pro Tem Tasha Kama from Kahului. . . *(applause in background)*. . . Keani Rawlins-Fernandez is on her way from Moloka'i, and Councilmember Gabe Johnson from Lāna'i. . . *(applause in background)*. . .

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you, Tom. So, I wanted to also thank our Staff and I always say without them we could not be here and they take care of all of the things and make sure we do the right thing. So, there's Jen Yamashita there and Stacey Vinoray. . . *(applause in background)*. . . Thank you very much. Ellen McKinley and Richelle, she's our Deputy Director. Hi, Richelle. . . *(applause in background)*. . . And there's Ryan, you'll meet Ryan...Ryan Martins. And Staff people who are here with us, I think I saw Uncle Don from Hāna, and...oh, I've introduced them. Oh, let's see. Sarah...oh Sarah Sexton, who is Keani Rawlins...her staffer. And yeah I think I got all the staff people. I invite...I introduced them already. Oh, Axel...Axel Beers. So, I see Axel and Jared in the back. So, Gina Young. Hello, Gina. . . *(applause in background)*. . . Oh, Stacy Takahashi is outside and Bill...and they are a part of his staff. So, everybody is here and for us, and thank you very much, *Akakū* for being here. So, this meeting, Members, community, is being...is an in person only and we're not doing online testimony. So, because of that, we have *Akakū* filming, so everything that you're going to share with us will be online at Facebook, as well as, mauicounty.us. So, your words are important. Today is our turn to listen to what you have to share. So, at this time, I just want to say if you're going to testify, please identify yourself, say your name, what organization you're from, and you will be given three minutes to testify, and if you're not done, you'll be given an additional 30 seconds to complete.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Sample the bell.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Oh, yeah, sample what the bell sounds like. Good idea. Yeah. . . *(timer sounds)*. . . Thank you. Thank you. And just so you know that because we're operating under Sunshine, everybody has equal amount of time to testify to be fair and, as well as we're giving you another 30 seconds to wrap up because

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it can be kind of...you can get into you want to say, but there is a time limit. So, at this time then, I would like to ask Staff to please announce the first testifier.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the first testifier is Sheena Bellavance, and she will be followed by Richard Pounds.

**. . .BEGIN PUBLIC TESTIMONY. . .**

MS. BELLAVANCE: Aloha. My name is Sheena Bellavance. Last year I spoke to you as a parent about the importance of quality after-school program. After that speech, I was recruited to be a part of that after-school programming, so here I am this year as both a parent and a teacher. I am here to testify in favor of continuing funding to the Maui Economic Development Board's STEMworks programs. I was originally introduced to the program when my own daughter joined. She's loved the program so much, she's recruited her friends to join. These programs offer an incredible resource to the youth of Maui. In an ever-changing world, it is important that we foster the curiosity in growth and science, technology, engineering, and math. It is important we provide an outlet and safe learning space for our talented students to continue to showcase their knowledge and grow into successful adults. Please continue funding this program to keep Maui kids up to par with any mainland competition and let us keep our talents here. Let us continue to be a part of Maui's growth and benefit our future generations. In addition to being a wonderful educational resource, the program offers a safe and welcoming after-school environment. For some kids, it might just be another hour of stability or community, something they may not receive at home. A small snack and some video game design or robotics are the highlights of some of these kids week. They get to hang out with like-minded friends and be the best they can be. For parents, it is another hour our children are being looked after, so we can work just a little bit longer, something that most families on Maui can relate to. Please continue to fund MEDB's STEMworks. Thank you. . . *(applause in background)*. . .

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

MS. MCKINLEY: The next testifier is Richard Pounds, to be followed by Gertrudes Holder.

MR. POUNDS: Oh, no that's good. Okay, thanks. Hello, my name is Rick Pounds...whoa...wow, Rick Pounds. Nice to meet you all tonight. I'm a bed and breakfast owner. My wife and I have lived on Maui in Maui Meadows for more than 30 years. In 1998, we were granted our bed and breakfast permit to use our cottage and rooms in our house for housing visitors. In fact, we were one of

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the first permits ever issued. To say the least, it's been challenging dealing with the County concerning our permit over the years. It's an understatement. But our neighbors have always embraced us and we've always made friends of our many guests that have come to us for the last 28 years. Property taxes always stuck us as unfair. Those who have followed the law for all those years maintained our B&B permits, I don't think that it's fair that we have to pay as much as three times what my neighbors pay in property tax as a result of our bed and breakfast permit. But the current proposal to increase our tax rate to \$5.00 per thousand is a step too far, especially in today's economy. This newly proposed rate, when applied to my...to my new...to my property, is the highest tax assessment we would increase in my tax bill from \$8,008 a year to \$11,345. That's a 41 percent increase in just one year. I want to stress that we're not a short-term rental. We live in our home, we stay there full-time, and it's not fair for us to pay three times the tax charged to my neighbor, who's a good guy anyway. But similarly...similarly . . . *(inaudible)* . . . Two years ago, we began paying the three percent Maui TAT and the County in the year additional one-half percent general excise. Isn't that enough? I also pay 10.25 TAT, which is passed on through my guests, and a four percent GET tax. Why should I also have to pay so much additional property tax? It's not fair and I'm asking the Council to reduce the tax rate from the commercialized residential tax class at 3.50, and this will still have me paying twice as much as my neighbor's pay. For all the years I've been there, I've lost hundreds of thousands of dollars just when the exemption was taken away. Never had an exemption in my home. As a result of the Lāhainā fires and of the...and announcements of the Governor and the Mayor, that visitors should not come to Maui, my business is off more than 50 percent. My wife and I are in our seventies, and survive off of B&B income. But my income is going down while my taxes are going up. I don't know how we'll make it. Please reduce the tax rate. The other thing that's not hit yet is the insurance. What the people in Maui are going to be paying for insurance is going to be crazy. It's going to go two and three times if certain insurance companies don't even leave. . . *(timer sounds)*. . . Just pick up. I've had enough time. Thank you very much. I appreciate your help.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you very much, Rick. Any questions for the testifier?  
. . . *(applause in background)*. . . Oh, can we get your copy of your testimony?

MR. POUNDS: Yes.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Thank you, Rick. Off...you might not know exactly, but in your area, how many bed and breakfasts are there and how many TVR, transient vacation rentals, are there?

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MR. POUNDS: In Maui Meadows, I think there's probably be about ten or 12 bed and breakfasts. I don't know about the TVRs. You know, it's...

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: So, you get along with your neighbors?

MR. POUNDS: Of course. Yes.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Okay.

MR. POUNDS: And they support us, because we keep our place quiet. We've never taken a vacation together, my wife and I.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Thank you.

MR. POUNDS: We have to be there. Okay. Thank you, Tom.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you, Rick. Next --

MR. POUNDS: Any other questions?

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Oh, looks like not. Next testifier, please.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, we have a quick announcement please. The owner of a silver Toyota Corolla, plate MNB078, your lights are on. Could you hear the first part? Silver Toyota Corolla, license plate MNB078.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Okay. Next testifier.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Gertrudes Holder, to be followed by Linda Puppolo.

MS. HOLDER: Good evening. I'm Gertrudes Holder. I work for Maui AIDS Foundation as a health insurance navigator. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to share our thoughts with you. Ever since the fires, I have worked in various disaster recovery centers, helping people enroll in Med-QUEST, healthcare.gov, or Obamacare plans, and Medicare. As I've worked with all these folks who are highly traumatized and have incredibly difficult challenging lives to navigate, I have realized that the very critical services that our foundation provides is something that should be funded and expanded. We provide STI testing for free and it's confidential and as you know people who are traumatized tend to, you know, have--engage in higher risk behavior. So, you know, it's a hidden effect of what...what the fires have done for us, so I really, and my agency would

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appreciate the opportunity to continue to provide and expand our testing service, our prevention services, and our harm reduction services. As I continue to enroll people, I educate them on what the opportunities are to make sure they're healthy. But one of the things that's most telling is if you look at the Hawai'i health data from 2022, Hawai'i is number 21 in terms of chlamydia infections, 40...number 43 in the states for gonorrhea, and unfortunately number 16 for syphilis. And this also impacts our pregnant moms, so I'd love the opportunity to see if we can extend our services and reduce infections and keep our community healthy. Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you very much. Any questions? . . .(applause in background). . .

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you. Just clarifying.

MS. HOLDER: Yes.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you, Ms. Holder.

MS. HOLDER: Yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Twenty-one in the State, or 21 --

MS. HOLDER: In the country.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Oh, okay.

MS. HOLDER: We're the 21st in the...I'm sorry. We're 21st in the country for chlamydia, the 43rd in terms of incidents rate for gonorrhea, and number 16 for syphilis in the country.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Out of 50?

MS. HOLDER: Yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Okay, got it.

MS. HOLDER: It's pretty alarming, so I, you know, any questions? Yes.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Seeing none. Thank you for your good work.

MS. HOLDER: Okay. Thank you.

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CHAIR SUGIMURA: Next testifier, please.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Linda Puppolo, to be followed by Nālani Kaninau.

MS. PUPPOLO: Council Chair and Councilmembers, thanks for having me back. I want to tell you that Maui...oh, I'm Linda Puppolo, from the Maui AIDS Foundation. I'm the Executive Director. Maui AIDS Foundation is a non-profit, health and social service organization serving the residents of Maui County for 37 years. The basic goals of Maui AIDS Foundation are treatment, core services to mitigate...minimize and eliminate possibly someday, HIV, HCV, and all STIs through testing, education, and to extend linkage to medical care. MAF also provides harm reduction services, syringe exchange services, and a food pantry. Not only--Gertie gave you some statistics, but the worst statistic of all is that we're tenth in the nation in congenital syphilis, which means our mothers are getting syphilis at a very high rate. Syphilis at one point in time was almost completely eliminated and it's on the rise again. We have to get...we have to figure out how to eliminate it. That's the most important thing and testing is the reason, the way we can do it. Testing and treatment and vaccination. Untreated infections can raise a person's risk of cancer in different ways. These...some...some viruses directly affect the genes inside the cell that control their growth. These viruses can insert their own genes into the cell, causing the cell to grow out of control. Some infections can cause long-term inflammation in a part of a body that can lead to changes, which affect the cells and nearby immune cells, and can eventually lead to cancer. Some types of infections can suppress a person's immune system, making them more likely to get cancer. 6,000 people per year in Hawai'i get cancer and 2,000 die, which is 33 percent of people that get cancer that pass away. One in five women get cervical cancer. One of five women that get cervical cancer have had chlamydia. So, we know that this is the real...the links to cancer are real and untreated...untreated STIs are the cause of many cancers, so...not always, but sometimes. And our goal is to eliminate in...by 2030 to eliminate STIs, hopefully Hep C and Hep B. So, I've given you statistics this...earlier today. I don't really need to say much...say much more, but I wanted you to understand why...the link between STIs and cancer is critical and we...what we don't want is to have STIs continue to rise in Hawai'i and especially Maui County. Also, I wanted you to know that we do serve all of Maui County. We go to Lāna'i, we go to Moloka'i, and we go to Hāna as well, as well as Upcountry. Thank you so much.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you very much. Any questions for Linda? Seeing none. Thank you very much. . . .(applause in background). . . Oh, Tamara...Linda, so Member Paltin has a question for you.

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COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Sorry.

MS. PUPPOLO: Oh, I'm sorry. I'm happy to answer them.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Just this time you mentioned about the food pantry. Is there not enough service from the other sources like Maui Food Bank and like that, or is it...what's the food pantry?

MS. PUPPOLO: Well, the food pantry is funded by Ryan White federal funds for part of it, and those federal funds serve our HIV and AIDS patients. Sometimes it's...we take it to their homes and we do home visits and things like that if they're ill. So, those...to keep the...you know, to keep the virus suppressed, the food and food security for them and food, you know, getting healthy foods is critical, so we provide food pantries through those federal funds. We also get food from the Food Bank and we serve the people that come in for syringe exchange sometimes. They'll need to...if you see them, you'll know they need to eat, so we feed them through the Food Bank. So, we have two separate funds for those.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Okay. So, it's not like a duplication of services because it's a specific need.

MS. PUPPOLO: Specific need, yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Okay. Got it. Thank you.

MS. PUPPOLO: Okay.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Next testifier.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Nālani Kaninau, to be followed by Randy Wagner.

MS. KANINAU: Aloha ahiahi, everyone. I am Nālani Kaninau and I really want to mahalo all of you for your time tonight and especially Councilmember Paltin, I don't have the words to honor your sacrifice and dedication. My primary concern is about the Mayor's proposed property tax rates and while I worry that my home in little Hale Pi'ilani, is now getting valued at over a million dollars, and without my homeowners exemption, that it would put me into a higher tax bracket and I am all about paying my fair share, absolutely. And so, really my concern is about the difference in rates for, you know, owner-occupied under a million is \$2.00. Three million and over is 3.25. I think that the Jeff Bezos and Oprah Winfreys and Larry Ellisons of the world can absolutely afford. I mean, it would be a drop in the bucket in their obscene wealth to pay a higher property tax and whether

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we move to make more tiers like how in the water bills, you know, there's so many other tiers. And I know that you probably have number crunchers people that-- because I was just googling trying to do my due diligence and, you know, to compare property taxes in Orange County, which is a very wealthy part of Southern California, and I mean the property taxes here are just so low and we desperately need the money for infrastructure and, you know, water delivery, wastewater. And also I also, you know, I want to acknowledge the generosity of our...some of our wealthy residents, but that...that we do really have to be better as a society to support the quality of life for the least amongst us and which sadly is disproportionately native Hawaiian. So, again I thank you for your time and raise the taxes.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you very much. Any questions? . . .*(applause in background)*. . . Okay. Thank you. Next testifier.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Randy Wagner, to be followed by Joan Martin.

MS. WAGNER: Aloha. Whoa, loud. My name is Randy Wagner and I represent the Kihei Community Association. In our request for a position for a new arborist, an additional arborist, because we have one for our 250,000 trees in Maui County, the County-owned trees. We really believe that climate change is happening and that our islands are getting hotter and that we need to combat the heat island effect. We have an existing ordinance for parking lots that requires one tree for every space, however, people who own the parking lots chop the tops off the trees, and we need someone who can help educate them and enforce the law that we already have. Because the trees provide fresh air. They provide uptake for runoff. They provide healthy environments so people can walk in the shade and encourage walking. They reduce the use and reliance on cars. They increase property values. They increase sales at places that have trees. The list just goes on, and on, and on, and it's free. And all we need to do is just have some guidance and some enforcement. So, I understand the State doesn't want us to create a new position at this time; however, I also understand that there may be funds for environmental protection. And I feel like that some of those funds could be directed to a really well needed person who could work probably a lot with the Planning Department and reviewing plans and making sure that the people who have presented the plans actually do what's required. So, that's all I have to say.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you very much. Any questions? . . .*(applause in background)*. . . Do you have a question? Oh, Member Johnson.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Thank you, Ms. Wagner. Can you speak a little bit

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about the parks in South Maui? Have you noticed any...any changes with the trees down here?

MS. WAGNER: I don't...they can. Well, I can tell you that the places--like for instance, the Kihei Elementary School has fabulous trees and they protect their trees and we have a ReShade Maui Campaign that I'm doing with Maui Green and Beautiful, and we spoke to the principal of the new high school here and they are totally on board with educating the kids and doing all that. But specifically to the parks, I'd rather let someone else speak to that.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Okay. Thank you, Ms. Wagner.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Member Paltin.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you for your testimony. Just wondering if you had a preference of where the arborist would be in, like Public Works, or --

MS. WAGNER: I think the Planning Department is where the arborist needs to be.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Oh, Planning Department.

MS. WAGNER: Yeah. I can't believe that, you know, all the planning that goes on and there's so many positions in the Planning Department and there's not a person who is an expert in the green infrastructure of our planning.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Okay. Planning Department. Got it. Thanks.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you very much. Nice seeing you.

MS. WAGNER: Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Next testifier. . . .*(applause in background)*. . .

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Joan Martin, to be followed by Tom Blackburn-Rodriguez.

MS. MARTIN: Thank you. Aloha. My name is Joan Martin. I'm testifying as an individual and I am a board member of the Hui No'eau Visual Art Center. First, I would like to thank you for all the work you're doing, during these challenging times here on our island. . . .*(clears throat)*. . . Excuse me. It's been eight months since the deadly fires in Lāhainā and Kula. Experts agree that children who were caught in the fires, lost family members, needed to be relocated because their homes and schools were destroyed, have suffered the most impact. The

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emotional damage can result in ongoing anxiety, trauma, emotional instability, shock, grief, and longer-term problems such as post-traumatic stress disorder and depression. Participating in artistic activities allows children a way to express emotions that may be too difficult to articulate. The American Art Therapy Association states that art therapy is used to reduce conflicts and distress, foster self-esteem, and builds emotional resilience and social skills. According to the Association, art engages the mind, body, and spirit in ways that are distinct from verbal communication. On Maui, we are fortunate to have the Hui No'eau, which has been reaching out to children all over the island, Lāna'i, and Moloka'i, since the fires. They're taking art supplies to schools and holding classes and workshops at no cost to the participants, fostering creativity and fun for our keiki, ages two to 17. I'm humbly requesting that you fund the Hui No'eau's Youth and Family Arts Education Outreach program for \$50,000 and Hui No'eau's Art with Aloha program for \$50,000. These programs provide over 8,000 Maui County children the ability to express themselves through hands-on art projects. I ask you to fund these programs not for me, not for the staff at the Hui No'eau, but as an investment in the thousands of Maui County children. Yes, thousands of children, so they will be strong and no longer carry their trauma and emotional instability into their future. I thank you very much.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you very much. Anybody have questions for Joan Martin? Go ahead. Oh, nice to see you. I'll introduce you. Go ahead. Welcome. I didn't see you walk in, I apologize. Member Rawlins-Fernandez.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Aloha, Chair. Aloha...aloha kākou. E kala mai for my tardiness. My meeting went a little longer than expected. I'm happy to be here.

MS. MARTIN: No question?

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Good. Question from Member Kama.

VICE-CHAIR KAMA: Yes, so good evening. And I wanted to ask you how many schools have you visited and how often are you visiting these schools in our County?

MS. MARTIN: Well, I'm on the board so I'm not the one visiting. Although I will say this, they have volunteers. I have recently gone up to the Hui, taken eight very large boxes of art supplies, and taken them to Lāhainā to the schools there where the teachers and the other staff have put together programs, very creative programs for these kids. But I believe that they are touching almost every school and they're also working with churches. And anyone that reaches out and says we have a group of children that could use some...some art supplies, they will adjust and make sure they get, you know, they do these big boxes, and then also

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do classes. So, there's the staff at the Hui and then there's volunteers, people like me and lots of people.

VICE-CHAIR KAMA: So, a lot of you just go out and you take art supplies to the schools and...

MS. MARTIN: I mean, that's what I did. They had asked --

VICE-CHAIR KAMA: So, do you volunteers stay with the art supplies and do activities with the students?

MS. MARTIN: No, I just --

VICE-CHAIR KAMA: Or you just leave the art supplies.

MS. MARTIN: I just deliver the supplies to the school, but the teachers then put --

VICE-CHAIR KAMA: And that's how you do outreach?

MS. MARTIN: They did...yeah, they did the outreach. Yeah.

VICE-CHAIR KAMA: Okay. Okay, thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you.

MS. MARTIN: Thank you. Thank you for your time.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Next testifier, please. Thank you, Joan. . . .*(applause in background)*. . .

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Tom Blackburn-Rodriguez, to be followed by Matthew Lugo.

MR. BLACKBURN-RODRIGUEZ: One of us is getting bigger. First of all, thank you for coming to South Maui. We appreciate you being here and I would like to say I'm sure on behalf of many whom you may not hear of, things are really going well in Maui County. We've had a lot of challenges, big, big, big body blows, and there's a lot of problems and a lot of things that are not going wrong. But basically, my message to you tonight is that this County is going in the right direction under your leadership through your challenges and I think I speak for a number of people who just want to say thank you. Thank you for your leadership. . . .*(applause in background)*. . . Now that I've set you up . . .*(laughing)*. . . I have three suggestions briefly that I would like to make and these all tie in to State

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climate planning, the State Office of Planning, the Coastal Zone Management Zone program, Act 234, which set the State policy framework for climate change. And I would like to make three general recommendations. Number one, is the funding for a climate change task force, such as that mandated in Act 20, in the Legislature, but was not funded and never met. I would think that a climate change task force might be useful to have in Maui County. Although I know there are a lot of activities going on, I'm not sure we have yet to pull together that central authority for management and it's going to get worse. It's not going to get better. So, I would recommend that we...we fund a climate change task force to begin the serious work on this. Also, I'd like to suggest language directing the Mayor to do an environmental policy audit with a goal of efficient allocation of scarce County resources and management reorganization to coordinate countywide activities to reduce greenhouse emissions, reduce them and prevent them. And I asked the question of who is the lead agency? There are a lot of responsibilities spread to the County, because every department affects the climate, but who is the lead agency and who is the agency where the individual is responsible for coordination with state, federal, and the private sector. Never forget the private sector has trillions of dollars and we should not ignore their resources as well. And finally, I would like to recommend funding of local fire prevention programs and partnerships through community associations. We've learned that we were not prepared. We've learned we're still not prepared. It takes a concentrative planning effort working with community organizations and local groups to put together a fire prevention program. We don't have one. We need one and I would like to recommend that funding be put in the budget to go to the community associations, such as the KCA . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . and the great work they are doing. And thank you. And in conclusion, I support the activities at the Kihei pool, I've been going there for 11 years. We need to do something. . . *(applause in background)*. . . Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you, Mr. Blackburn. Any questions? Member Johnson.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Mr. Blackburn, I just want to...I'm curious if you ever worked with Josh Cooper in Office of OIS?

MR. BLACKBURN-RODRIGUEZ: Not directly, no.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Okay, well maybe reach out to him, because he's trying to do some of those things that you're mentioning and maybe you can speak to him on some of those issues.

MR. BLACKBURN-RODRIGUEZ: I think I've spoken with him perhaps in a radio program in an interview, but never have done any work with him. But you're absolutely right, there are so many fingers on this hand, we need to make a fist.

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Thank you.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Well said. Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Thank you very much. Next testifier. . . .*(applause in background)*. . .

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Matthew Lugo, to be followed by Ron Viloría.

MR. LUGO: It's at the right height. Aloha. I am Matthew Lugo, Aerospace Engineer of Privateer Space and Ka Ipu Kukui Fellow. And I am testifying in support of Maui Economic Development Board's Economic Development grant under the Maui County Office of Economic Development. As a local boy, I went to college, knowing that I probably would never find a job on my home island and maybe not even my State. I was okay with that math and science and engineering was how my brain worked and I sadly decided that I would follow my passion. I know I wasn't alone in that. Many of my brightest friends have moved on to the mainland and they're looking for a path home. Some of them are even asking me for a job. While I was lucky and found a wonderful job here, most may never get that chance. Maui Economic Development Board is helping with that. They are pushing for economic diversification in an area that I believe shows enormous potential for Maui County, science and technology. They have taken visibly a two-prong approach, foster the youth and catalyze the development of jobs, community, and opportunity. MEDB has as a multitude of programs to encourage the next...our next generation into tech focus jobs. There is STEMworks, through which we've had several excellent interns, and programs like Introduce a Girl to Engineering Day, which seeks to give exposure to some of the most underrepresented groups of Maui County. I have seen how impactful and inspirational these programs can be firsthand. But it's not enough to get kids interested. We need to ensure that they have good jobs when they get back. MEDB is also helping spearhead this as well. They host the AMOS tech conference, the top scientific conference in the field of space situational awareness. They provide office space for my company and several others. They encourage cooperation in collaboration within Maui's tech community to help enable growth. Maui Economic Development Board is helping with Maui County's resilience and economic diversification through enabling the creation of jobs and opportunity for the next generation. I reaffirm my support for MEDB's Economic Development grant. Mahalo.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Nice seeing you. . . .*(applause in background)*. . . Anybody have questions for Matthew? Seeing none. Thank you very much. Keep up your good work. Next testifier, please.

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MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Ron Viloría, to be followed by Tiare Sua.

MR. VILORIA: Esteem Members of the Council, howzit. My name is Ron Viloría and I'm one of the fortunate locals that have been able to build my family, career, and also business as an entrepreneur by staying in my great 808 home state here in Hawai'i. I am humbly honored to provide testimony for the Maui Economic Development Board, MEDB. Since its inception in 1982, MEDB has dedicated over four decades to fostering innovation and economic growth in our community. I stand before you, enriched by the profound impact of programs like JUMPSmartMaui, EVohana, and meet ups and events like Startup Weekend, TechOhana, and the AMOS tech conference, all of which have not only nurtured a family of tech-oriented individuals, but also have...but have also proven vital in cultivating a connected and forward-thinking community here in Maui. Throughout these 42 years, I hope I can add, MEDB has been instrumental in developing educational and entrepreneurial pathways that have benefitted countless individuals. My involvement with these programs has allowed me to witness firsthand the transformative power of bringing together a community that is committed to technological empowerment and innovation. My most favorite program is STEMworks, where I have been a mentor to many interns many times and I have learned more from them as they have from me. As we refocus to the future envisioning the next two, five, and ten years, we see MEDB continuing to play a pivotal role. Take STEMworks for example, where today's interns are nurtured to become...to become tomorrow's mentors, sustaining this cycle of growth and community enrichment. My experiences with MEDB has been truly unforgettable and they compel me to ensure that the legacy and reputation of MEDB are not just remembered, but are built upon. So, what can the initials of MEDB also stand for? That could be many things, you know, multiplying excitement, defeating burdens, or maximizing education and developing business. What it really means to me, M-E, is me disrupting barriers and making a difference so that we can diversify beyond borders. So, in closing, I extend a heartfelt mahalo to MEDB for the memories and the immeasurable impact on my life and our community, and also to the Maui County Council. Thank you in advance for your continued love and support. And together, let's ensure that the future of Maui . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . is as bright as its beautiful shores. Mahalo to all of you in advance for your commitment to the shared future.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Well said. Very nice. . . *(applause in background)*. . . Anybody have questions for the testifier? Seeing none. Thank you. Next testifier, please.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Tiare Sua, to be followed by Adelle Rugg.

MS. SUA: Hey, I'm the same height as the microphone. I love it. Aloha mai kākou. My name is Tiare Sua and I work for the Maui AIDS Foundation. I'm pretty sure

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you've seen all my peers today and on virtual. I'm the Director for prevention and education and I've been with our organization since 2007. I do look over a lot of our harm reduction programs and our STI programs that we have at Maui AIDS Foundation, and we can see where the direction of our programs need to be expanded, so that's why I'm here today to kind of talk about expansion, especially with our STI services that we provide at MAF. The one thing that we see is with syphilis, chlamydia, and gonorrhea, it's been a pain in our butts. It's constantly going up and down, up and down, and we only have one provider in our organization, and we see 400 people a year. That's how much we service. In one year, we actually see about 18 to 19 individuals with co-infection such as chlamydia, gonorrhea, or sometimes even with syphilis. Last year, we have serviced about 436 individuals--I believe it's 436. And we've been seeing our youth become infected with HIV. I mean, these are some youth that...who just graduated from high school. So, our harm reduction services too has another connection because we see hepatitis C going up within our State and CDC has released their statement on people who have contracted hepatitis C within the State of Hawai'i will die 20 years earlier than those who are living with hep C in the states. That's a...that's a hard knock, because it is our Native Hawaiian Kānaka Maoli individuals who are dying from hep C. Please consider expanding our services and finding us a nurse so that we can do more of the field work. We've actually...we've actually exchanged on a one-for-one exchange over 4,000 needles from July 2023 'til present day. And the year...our fiscal year hasn't even ended yet and there's many more to come. But we don't only exchange for them to come in to get clean needles. Our approach is to actually look at them and be like what is the trauma? Where is this coming from? How can we handle this? Where can we service you? How can we help you on your journey to recovery? That's the number one thing. So, please consider us. Thank you for having us testify and you guys are beautiful, and I'm a resident of Kihei too, so it's good to see you guys here. Mahalo nui. Aloha.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Aloha. . . .(applause in background). . . Anybody have questions? Member Paltin.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you for your testimony, Ms. Sua. I was wondering in the prevention, do you also vaccinate for hep B and hep C if they don't have it?

MS. SUA: So, we have two different departments. So, one is the clinical department, and that's where we need like the expansion for like our nurse. So, I work in the prevention and education department and it kind of...it kind of overlaps, because clinical department provides treatment for the test that we provide for our community. So, if they come out positive in our department, then it goes over to our clinical department, and there is only one person who is providing that

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treatment and who has been providing that treatment for the past three years.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: So, if they come negative, then would you offer vaccination?

MS. SUA: We always offer vaccinations. We talk about vaccinations all the time and we talk about hep A and B vaccinations, because we also provide PrEP, which is pre-exposure prophylaxis. It's a...it's a medicine that kind of helps people prevent themselves from contracting HIV.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: And the hep vaccinations is free?

MS. SUA: We don't provide hep A and B vaccinations just yet, but that is something in the process that we need, because in order to access PrEP, you need to be hep A and B negative.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Oh, okay. Got it. Thanks.

MS. SUA: Yeah.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Oh, Member Johnson. . . .(audio interference). . . Okay. Member Johnson, then Kama.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Okay. Thank you for all the work that you do.

MS. SUA: Mahalo.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: My question is in regards to your needle exchange post-and pre-fire. So, after the fire has the needle exchange gone up? Have you noticed a higher use of the needles?

MS. SUA: Yes, and this one was a hard one and a tricky one for us, because we have to exchange on a one-for-one basis. So, if they...if there...let's just say for instance, if their needles did burn in the fire, we're not allowed to exchange them just free needles. They would have to find an area or bring needles to us to exchange. I think it's against the law or it's against Hawai'i and Harm Reduction's policies. So, we work with Hawai'i Health and Harm Reduction on O'ahu, and we have a MOA, MOU through them so that we can exchange needles here, because they only have one person who services the whole island, so they brought us on.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Okay. Thank you for that clarification. Thank you, Chair.

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MS. SUA: Yeah, yeah. Of course.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Member Kama.

VICE-CHAIR KAMA: Thank you. Thank you, Chair. So, are you folks allowed or are able to go into the high schools and do those kinds of educations?

MS. SUA: Ah, mahalo nui for that question. We just started going back into the high schools. I know that there is a little bit of kind of like a stipulation, so it really depends on the principals on if they want to bring this type of education into the high school or not, because...and we kind of share our curriculum with them. So, now we have...we look at like Boys and Girls Club, and we look at like other sources outside of the schools like where we can have these conversations with the youth. But that's a good one. We haven't been in the schools very long and we are ready to get back in there, so we've been trying to make that outreach work in that connection.

VICE-CHAIR KAMA: So, have you thought about reaching out to the Office of Hawaiian Affairs for funding for Kānaka Maoli that really need this kind of education?

MS. SUA: That would be nice. I mean, as a Hawaiian, that's like...that is very nice to hear and I feel like we haven't...we used to have that OHA grant --

VICE-CHAIR KAMA: Yes.

MS. SUA: But we didn't...it got shut down a long time ago, so I think because the grant ended, and so now it's like another opportunity. Thank you for offering that for us.

VICE-CHAIR KAMA: Or even the Office of Native Hawaiian Health, right, can help. But...but I think everybody...this is our people, this is our community, and therefore whatever we all can do collectively to help each other is what we should do. So, thank you for being here tonight.

MS. SUA: Mahalo nui for that.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Member Sinenci.

COUNCILMEMBER SINENCI: Mahalo, Tiare for your...your work in the community.

MS. SUA: Thank you.

COUNCILMEMBER SINENCI: I was...I was curious if...are you guys able to access

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patients' insurance for the testing?

MS. SUA: So, good question. So, we don't charge people's insurance.

COUNCILMEMBER SINENCI: Oh.

MS. SUA: Like this is completely a free clinic and a lot of times people don't come. So, we get people who come from like Minit Medical or they have like a very, very expensive premium, or like very not-so-good premium with Kaiser or HMSA, and when they come to see us, they're like oh, we got to pay like \$300 out of pocket just for a syphilis test or like this, and I'm just like, oh my God, that's so expensive. So, they come to us, we service them. However, if they do access PrEP wise, we do have through the pharmaceutical company who actually creates PrEP, they have like medical assistance programs so that people can jump on. We do have a program where we kind of like if they don't have money to pay for labs because they need to do blood work too at the same time, we do have a program where we can pay for them to do labs, but sometimes there's no money to pay, yeah, so they would have to scrounge up the money. Yeah.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you.

MS. SUA: Any more questions?

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you very much.

MS. SUA: Yeah. Mahalo, everyone. Aloha.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Okay, thank you for answering all the questions. Next testifier.  
. . .(applause in background). . .

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Adele Rugg, to be followed by Anna Merritt.

MS. RUGG: That's a tough act to follow. Good evening and aloha. My name is Adele Rugg, and I want to welcome all of the County Councilmembers to my hood. I so appreciate you coming to Kihei. And I know how hard you all work for us 24/7, seven days a week, I know that for a fact. Tonight I am wearing a couple of hats. My first is MEO. Full disclosure, I am a board member of this awesome organization. I humbly ask you to continue funding MEO. They have touched the lives of everyone in this County in some way or another. Their mission statement says it all. Community action changes people's lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes America and Maui a better place to live. We care about the entire community and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other. My other hat is Maui Green and

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Beautiful. The County needs another arborist. I do not ever like to compare the County of Maui with any other island since we are Maui nō ka 'oi. However, did you know that the City and County of Honolulu has at least 30 arborists. The County of Maui has one. Our current arborist has four islands to take care of. This is impossible. We are in desperate need of one or more arborists to assist our current one. I humbly ask for your support. And one last item, just wondering what you are doing on Saturday afternoon around 3:30. If you need to relax, sit back, and enjoy music, the awesome Maui Community Band will be performing a free concert at the Queen Ka'ahumanu Center. We need an audience. Hope you can make it. Again, thanks for coming to Kihei. I appreciate you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. . . .*(applause in background)*. . . Thank you, Adele. Any questions for Ms. Rugg? Seeing none. We can tell you have lot of experience. Thank you.

MS. RUGG: Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Next testifier.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Anna Merritt, to be followed by Sean Yannell.

MS. MERRITT: That's good. Thank you so much. Thank you, everyone for coming tonight and giving us a chance to speak. My name is Anna Merritt. I work for MEO Head Start. I'm the Family Services Manager there. I have some testimonies from two of our parents who weren't able to be here tonight. The first one is, as a mother of Angel . . .*(inaudible)*. . . MEO Head Start. I'm very grateful for this program. It's given me and my daughter the opportunity to learn and attain skills as she embarks towards kindergarten. Angel loves her teachers and has made friends and enjoys the age-appropriate lessons. I really appreciate that it's free and it's allowed me a chance to work part-time. Mahalo. This is from Leilani Kauhola. My other letter that I have is from Lee Diadorth [*sic*]. She says her four year old son Robert John Diadorth [*sic*], also known as Robbie, is currently enjoying his second year at Kihei MEO Head Start Center. We really appreciate Maui County's support of funding for the MEO Head Start programs. This program has had great benefit for him over the past year and a half. He has no peers or cousins his age in our home or neighborhood, so the MEO Kihei Head Start Center has been essential in improving his language and social skills. We urge your continued support and even possible cost of living increase for funding for the upcoming fiscal year. The Head Start program is of great benefit for families like ours who cannot afford other daycare programs. It gives us great satisfaction in seeing our son so well prepared to begin kindergarten next fall. Thank you for letting me give that.

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CHAIR SUGIMURA: How sweet. Anybody have questions? . . .(applause in background).  
. . . Seeing none. Thank you very much.

MS. MERRITT: Okay. Thank you.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Sean Yannell, to be followed by Chistina De Leon.

MR. YANNELL: Thank you. And MEO does incredible work, so thank you guys. Hi, my name is Sean Yannell. I'm here on behalf of MEDB, specifically the STEMworks portion. I'm currently a media and computer science teacher at Lokelani Intermediate, so just right over a block away or so. And I just want to say how I've...this is my second year with STEMworks and I just want to say how incredible it is to work with that program and I want to thank all of you guys for your support with it. Because as a teacher who gets to work with students in their normal classroom, I just see how much great work this AFTERSchool program does, and to me it's incredibly necessary because there's so much...only so much you can do in a normal classroom. You know, you're trying to teach in these gigantic rooms, you know, and these kids have all their special needs and things, but when it comes to STEMworks, it gives you that time to really focus with the students and find their interest and get to build out from that. So, what you're trying to do, I find is really incredible about it, is you can find students who are both incredibly gifted and also students who are special needs students, and they really gravitate towards each other and they can see each other as mentors. You can see kids from different ages who maybe would never be in the same classroom together are now working together on the same project. Like recently, we had a student who was...I do their game design, and we're doing modeling and stuff. So, one student was loving modeling these different like World War II airplanes and tanks, and another student separately was...so that was an eighth grader, and we had a sixth grader who was programming, and he was getting into programming games. And they never would have talked to each other outside of this program, but we ended up--I said, hey look it, I think that both of you should work together to make a game. And they just naturally started gravitating towards each other and they are really excited to make this like historically...as historically accurate as they can, like a game with like World War II style airplanes and things. I'm getting a little bit off track, but I think we had a lot of incredible MEDB here, people talking about our programs. I just kind of wanted to give you like the personal like, what I see, like personally with this. Yeah, the field trips that they allow us to do, I got to go on every single one of them this year, and it was...they were incredible. So, we did an ag day, which we all went up to Kamehameha School and we had to plant trees. We got to look at...they had like...they brought fish out for us to like look at the fish in these

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tanks. They got...yeah, it was just incredible. The AMOS space day I think they talked about earlier, these kids were just like completely in awe. They got to meet an astronaut. Some of them said it was the best day of their life. Introduce a Girl to Engineering Day was incredible just to get all of these young women into the same area and see professionals that are like at the top of their game who have connections to Hawai'i and letting them to know that's possible. And of course, the STEM trip where we went to O'ahu at the STEM conference. . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . We're really proud of our kids. They ended up winning a...the AI generated art story contest and, yeah. Anyway, I won't take up too much of your time. But thank you guys so much for supporting this program. It's been incredible.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thanks for being an enthusiastic teacher. . . .*(applause in background)*. . .

MR. YANNELL: Yeah, thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Anybody have questions? Member Paltin.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you, Mr. Yannell, for your testimony and your service. I had two questions. The first one was about the fish. Was that like aquaponics?

MR. YANNELL: Yeah, exactly. They brought the aquaponics out to the presentation so the kids could actually...I don't know how he did it, but he like...I guess the fish are used to it. But they had the tilapia out there and just had a full-on demonstration out in the middle of a field, and I don't know how my kids would have seen something like that otherwise, yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: And are they building it now?

MR. YANNELL: That's at Kamehameha School. I'm not exactly sure what they're doing. We just got to go take a tour of it, so, yeah. But, we have --

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Oh, oh, oh. But, you guys could figure it out with STEMworks?

MR. YANNELL: Yeah, exactly. It's something that we can take back and talk to our gardener about, you know. So, yeah. There's just a couple --

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: And then the other one I had a question about was the Introduce a Girl to Engineering. Was the County of Maui involved, because we need some engineers.

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MR. YANNELL: Yeah, we definitely need some more engineers. I'm not sure I think . . . *(inaudible)*. . . knows more about if the County of Maui was involved with that day. But it was, yeah, it was...we had a bunch of different people that the MEDB had found and people worked at the telescope, we had people from Space Force, we had people from --

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Oh, I'm interested specifically in Public Works, Maui County, or the Water Department. Any of those guys?

MR. YANNELL: Oh, oh. You know, we had...I think we had the electric department. Yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Oh, electric company.

MR. YANNELL: Yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Okay, we got to get on that, because we need more engineers to come to the County.

MR. YANNELL: Yeah, that would be cool.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you very much.

MR. YANNELL: Yeah, thank you so much.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Next testifier, please. . . *(applause in background)*. . .

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Cristina De Leon, to be followed by ReneAl Dumarán.

MS. DE LEON: Aloha, Councilmembers. My name is Cristina De Leon and I am here on behalf of the Teran James Young Foundation, and specifically our Kēōkea Eco Village project. If allowed to move forward, this project would serve as a type of kauhale, providing housing for up to 212 homeless individuals. Providing shelter for the homeless is not only the right thing to do, but it's also a cost-effective solution. It is no secret that there is a homeless crisis on our island, with an estimated 704 houseless people on Maui at the last Point-in-Time Count. Governor Green has stated that chronically homeless people make up for most of the highest Medicaid utilizers in the State. The average cost per person to the health system is \$4,650 per day, not to mention the financial toll of homeless arrests and the strain on our justice system. The Kēōkea Eco Village project would provide housing, along with case management and supportive services to

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achieve long-term stability. I want to stress that this is not our project, but something that the local community has expressed a need and a desire for. The subject property for this project is 41 acres on the north east corner of South Kihei Road and Welakahao Road, makai of Pi'ilani Highway. The current owner plans on building 80 luxury homes on this property, but let's be real, no one wants that. Instead, after speaking with locals and hosting a community meeting, we learned that what is needed is a solution for the existing homeless on the property, and to protect and regenerate the existing wetland to restore it to its original purpose. TJYF has been working for the last year with environmental scientists, architects, and engineers to design solutions that reflect the community's values and vision. This plan was created with the help of the community and we remain open to community input. We are reaching the final stages of our development plan, and have also received a promise to sell from the current owner. We are currently looking for sources of funding to purchase the land and begin development of the Eco Village. I want to thank the County for its support of this project so far and ask that you continue to support us as we move towards making the Kēōkea Eco Village a reality. The true measure of any society is how it treats its most vulnerable members. Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. So, do you have funding now from the County?

MS. DE LEON: So, we have...we received a grant from the Office of Economic Development to create the plan and that grant expires at the end of the month.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: And how much was the grant for?

MS. DE LEON: It was for...I want to say 13,000 or 14,000, I can't remember exactly.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. I think Member Johnson has a question.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Did you find the price of the land yet...the cost of the land?

MS. DE LEON: So, the land was appraised. So it's 41 acres and it's appraised for just over six million. We spoke with the current owner and his realtor, he has asked for more than six million. His reasoning being that he's put more into it in order to attempt to develop it. But we hope to make a counter offer and have him bring down the price. Thank you.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Thank you. Thank you so much. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Member Kama.

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VICE-CHAIR KAMA: So...so, you got planning monies from the County? And so, you're asking for what now? Design monies?

MS. DE LEON: So, this will be money to actually purchase the land from the current owners so we can --

VICE-CHAIR KAMA: Oh, okay. Acquisition.

MS. DE LEON: Yes, exactly. Land acquisition.

VICE-CHAIR KAMA: And how much was that for?

MS. DE LEON: So, it was appraised for a little over six million, but the owner...the owner is actually asking for ten million, but we hope to bring him down. We hope to make a counter offer of about eight million.

VICE-CHAIR KAMA: Okay. Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Thank you very much.

MS. DE LEON: Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Next testifier. . . .*(applause in background)*. . .

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is ReneAl Dumaran, to be followed by Kelly King.

MS. DUMARAN: Aloha. My name is ReneAl Dumaran. I'm here on behalf of MEO Head Start. Let me tell you, I was so excited to come here and testify on their behalf that I didn't even read the whole email. I wasn't sure what I was here for, I just wanted to sing the praises. I am a past Head Start child. I'm a current teacher's aide and a current parent of a child in Head Start. Without Head Start...I came here as a parent that was staying at home for ten years. I was scared to get back into the workforce, I didn't know what to do with my kids, I have three of them. That being said, with three children, I've had a child in private school and in public school, and Head Start goes above and beyond anything that they've been in. They truly, truly care about their parents, their children, and their well-being. Without Head Start, I wouldn't have my friend here today. She was homeless at the time of her child being in Head Start. She had nowhere to go, wasn't sure where the next meal would come from, how to get her child to Head Start, and she told me that just the kind words and the understanding that their teachers gave to them, it let her push on and continue and now she is...she has multiple degrees, she is the assistant manager of a store, and her child does amazingly

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well in Kihei Elementary now. Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Nice. . . *(applause in background)*. . . Anybody has questions? Seeing none. Thank you very much. Next testifier, please.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Kelly King, to be followed by Elaine Malina.

MS. KING: I'm probably the same height as . . . *(inaudible)*. . . Thank you. Good timing for me to use the mic. Aloha, Council and thank you again for being in South Maui, I know everybody is saying that to you, but I appreciate...and I appreciate Member Rawlins-Fernandez rushing over here after your meeting, I know how things...how busy things get. I'm going to try to talk fast, because I have a laundry list here as you can imagine. But the first thing I want to say is I support the kūpuna aquatic resources classes that they're trying to have, and I really hope that you see all the people that were here today in protest, because they have not gotten a response, which is the worst thing, you know. At least respond to them. Their...their...the equipment that they're using for their classes has been locked up, so there's not even money involved. It's just let the--you know, let these classes go on. These are really important, and it's one of the reasons we pay our taxes. I want to support the STEM program. My own son went through that. He's now, you know, researching and making some headway in the field of human longevity, and in my wildest fantasies, it's because he wants his parents to live longer. I don't know if that's really what it is, but that program, you know, they still talk about my son at that program, so they're very connected to the students and they actually follow them in their careers. For South Maui, our top priority is the North-South Collector Road, and we have got to get that going, because in 2026, if we don't use those federal funds, we're going to lose them, the \$25 million. So, please focus on that. Get whatever monies we have to do to get on the properties we need to get on to do the siting, because it's really...we're not taking...we're not asking to take property, but we do need access and we're being denied access. Tom, you know that. So, that's a very important part of this. But this road...this...we've been working on this for 40 years, you know, and it's finally in a good place where there's a good design and we're still talking about a two-lane. I've been on that road for over 40 years. When they first started talking about it, we didn't want it because they were talking about a four-lane highway through there and they were going to take everybody's front yards on either side of that road. So, it's a much more reasonable ask now, and it's necessary because that's going to become our South Kihei Road in the next ten or 20 years. We're going to lose portions of South Kihei Road, we're going to need that for access. We need it for access right now, you know, in case we have a similar fire or a disaster, heaven forbid. Please fund the wetlands. I know there's been some cuts in the wetlands program. That is crucial to Kihei to South Maui. We needed it in Lāhainā too, so I'm hoping some of the wetlands come

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back in the rebuild, and I'm really happy that Tamara is there because I know you're watching out for that. I also support the Eco Village and that was one of the last meetings I had in my last term was with property owners to get...ascertain that they were willing to sell. But we have no facilities in South Maui for homeless. And then, you know, of course, now the one in Lāhainā burnt down. So, this is going to be a crucial facility if you folks can see your way to funding that. So, on the larger picture, I wanted to just reiterate that the Water Authority was a Charter Amendment that was passed by almost 65 percent of the population. We need to fund that. The Water Authority is one of the most important things and please stop trying to give private contracts away to transmit our water system--you know, for water systems, this is a public trust and the public should own all that water system, that's why we put the Water Authority on the Charter Amendment list, and that's why people voted for it. . . .*(applause in background)*. . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . We want control of our own resources. And I would say the same thing for Housing and the 'Ōiwi Resources. Those were Charter Amendments and it's the law, so, you know, please do not discount this. I know it's tough times, but we have to pay attention to the law. And then lastly, I just wanted to ask you to consider reinstating, I don't think it's big money, but the youth council that we did in my last term. That was an amazing exercise and that is how we're going to bring these young leaders up into a place where they feel comfortable leading our community. But, you know, other than...maybe, Keani we're all getting older, and we got to start paying attention, well, I'm sorry, Tamara, you're not as old as me either, but you know, we have to start paying attention to our youth and that was one of the excellent . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . programs that happened that kind of got dropped. So, I would love to see that project happen again and I'm happy to help wherever I can.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Any questions for Ms. King? . . .*(applause in background)*. . . Seeing none. Thank you. Nice seeing you.

MS. KING: Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Next testifier.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Elaine Malina, to be followed by DiAnn Colton.

MS. MALINA: Hi. Aloha, everyone, and thank you for coming this evening, and thank you for coming to South Maui. My name is Elaine Malina. I'm part of the Maui Green and Beautiful. It's a non-profit that focuses on trees. I know there's so much on your plate, but trees are really important. They're really easy answer to climate change. More trees, more benefits they give us, shade, but you need more experts to take care of them in your County. You do have over almost a quarter

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million trees, or 250,000, sorry...close enough. But anyway, please think of adding an additional arborist on your staff. Trees are...they are the answer and we went through so much with the Maui fires and one of the things that brought us hope was the 'ulu trees, the Lāhainā banyan tree. It connected to everyone, all these, and there's so much work going on. But you need more and, Tim, your arborist is an excellent person, he's doing...but he needs support and another person. Also consider that something that's free that can be done is the citizen forestry program that they do have on O'ahu that we might look into to bring to Maui. I know Kaua'i has it and that and, again, you know, thank you for your time. I know you have a lot to do and I really appreciate it. We all do. Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. . . .*(applause in background)*. . . Any questions? Seeing none. Thank you very much. Next testifier.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is DiAnn Colton, to be followed by Lisa Labrecque.

MS. COLTON: Hi, I'm DiAnn, Diane Colton, however you want to pronounce it is fine. I'm going to backtrack from my first what I had written down that I was going to speak about, and that was the Human Society and the crisis with animals not just here in shelters, but all over the United States. It's in *Newsweek*. It's in any periodical you pick up. People are not adopting from shelters. Shelters are overfull and one of the main reasons we think it's just housing. It is because people are buying specialty breeds, paying thousands of dollars, and a lot of the breeders are backyard breeders and they pay no taxes. And if you want to just see pick up Craigslist or Facebook and you will see breeders with thousands and thousands of dollars' worth of dogs every single day, and a lot of those end up back at the shelter, especially the mothers, or the ones that they don't want anymore. I'm going to start from the top down because the first gentlemen spoke of property taxes and how it is...right now, I don't own a home. I probably won't ever again. But he spoke of the incremental tax against really the small person is what I can see here. And what I wanted to point out is in--if you look at the *Los Angeles Times*, they passed what they called a luxury mansion tax, and it wouldn't affect the little people who have a little--whether it's an Airbnb or, you know, however you want to call it. The small guys, certainly not the big hotels that you continue to build here and they wouldn't be building them if they weren't making money, the luxury hotels. They're building luxury condominiums all the way down through Mākena from five to \$15 million and this article talks about the mansion tax took effect and it went from anything over five million was a four percent increase, and anything over ten million was a 5.5. The people that...the three people the gentleman here mentioned, the Oprahs, and the Bezos, et cetera, again, that's a drop in the bucket. It did affect their mansion sales in LA and the

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West Hollywood Hills, however, they're still selling. And everything we've heard tonight is about funding and it's about funding programs for people and this is environmental programs, you name it. And the least among us are these and they have no say except for what we say, you know. And I would like to see a dollar of property taxes a checkmark for a spay and neuter program, because right now a three a four-month wait is just not going to solve the problem. The cup runneth over. And . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . just to let you know, the business tax above ten million funded affordable housing and homelessness initiatives. It became the dominating story in real estate. It went from six...went into six programs: short-term emergency rental assistance, eviction defense, tenant outreach, education, direct cash for low-income seniors, people with disabilities, and affordable housing. I am a kūpuna basically with nowhere to go because people are renting to, and I can't blame them, I'm sorry I'm not Hawaiian...I've been here 23 years, and I have HUD, but nobody will take it. . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . So, I'm facing homelessness myself.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Okay. You didn't tell us the name of your dog.

MS. COLTON: This is Judd.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Judd.

MS. COLTON: My third little rescue from HARF and I've had two other rescues that were service dogs.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you.

MS. COLTON: He sat through cancer therapy with me during COVID.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Aww...

MS. COLTON: So, I just want to stress how important they are and they are a part of our lives.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you.

MS. COLTON: And this mansion tax, we can afford.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. All right.

VICE-CHAIR KAMA: Chair.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Any questions? . . .*(applause in background)*. . .

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VICE-CHAIR KAMA: I do, I do.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Next testifier.

VICE-CHAIR KAMA: DiAnn, DiAnn.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Oh, did you have a question?

VICE-CHAIR KAMA: Yeah, I do. DiAnn.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Oh, Member Kama has a question for you.

VICE-CHAIR KAMA: So, I don't get the *LA Times*, but you must have it on your phone.

MS. COLTON: I do.

VICE-CHAIR KAMA: Could you text it to me? I'd like to read that article.

MS. COLTON: Yes.

VICE-CHAIR KAMA: And then the other thing I'd like to ask you, do you have to pay for a license for your dog or do you have to...you don't have to? You don't have to pay for an application, or you... . . .*(inaudible)*. . .

MS. COLTON: No, under US Disabilities Act, he can go with me anywhere and I don't pay anything.

VICE-CHAIR KAMA: Okay.

MS. COLTON: He is my basically --

VICE-CHAIR KAMA: But if he wasn't under the DCAB, would you have to pay any kind of a dog registration or license or something like that?

MS. COLTON: No. I mean if he wasn't under the Disabilities Act?

VICE-CHAIR KAMA: Yes.

MS. COLTON: Yes. He's licensed by the County. I mean, he has his --

VICE-CHAIR KAMA: Okay. So, you had to pay for a license for him if he wasn't under that, right?

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MS. COLTON: Yes. Sure.

VICE-CHAIR KAMA: What is that?

MS. COLTON: Either way.

VICE-CHAIR KAMA: What is that? What would that be?

MS. COLTON: He's fixed. It would have been \$7.00.

VICE-CHAIR KAMA: Oh, okay. Okay. Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Next testifier, please.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Lisa Labrecque, to be followed by Connie Pluchos.

MS. LABRECQUE: Thank you. Aloha, Councilmembers. I'm back again tonight, Lisa Labrecque, CEO of Maui Humane Society. I started my day with you. I've provided testimony this morning, and I had...there were several questions that me and my staff were unable to answer, so I was encouraged to return this evening with answers for you. So, here we go. The first question was regarding our new partnership with Lānaʻi Cat Sanctuary, so I have the numbers that Councilmember Paltin had asked for. The MOU that we signed with Lānaʻi Cat Sanctuary where they are agreeing to accept 200 cats from Lāhainā in exchange for 200 friendly Lānaʻi cats was for \$2,250 per cat...per cat. And you'd be interested to know that most sanctuaries, we did a lot of research on this, ask \$4,000 or more to take in cats into sanctuaries. So, our estimate is that the \$2,250 per cat will cover the cost of their care for only about a year. Okay. Then the second question we had was how much donations we've received since the fires. So, I had to check with my development team on this, but we have received approximately 9.4 million in donations to support our wildfire relief efforts. These funds have been and will continue to be applied directly towards caring for fire affected animals and their families and we must ensure that these donated funds are used in alignment with the intentions of our donors, specifically to aid our fire relief efforts rather than being used for our general operations. Okay. The third question I believe also from Councilmember Paltin, was regarding the number of pet surrenders we have had since the fire. So, I have some numbers for you. Between August 8th and March 30th, we have received 590 total surrender inquiries. Of those, 180 were related to the fires, and 119 were deferred as our team was able to provide resources to these owners to be able to keep their pets. And one other note, we currently maintain a waiting list for pets

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to be surrendered and the reason we have a waiting list is because sometimes owners don't need to surrender them immediately. For example, one family they've told us we have until the end of the year, and so since it's not an immediate need, they're on a waiting list, because we are over capacity using hundreds of animals in foster homes saving space for the animals that have no other place to go. And then finally, to clarify, there was some confusion around our budget requests for our humane enforcement contract and our Moloka'i contract. So, for humane enforcement, we asked the County for 1.14 million . . . *(timer sounds)*. . . for Fiscal 2025, and the Mayor's budget fall short of that by 81,000, which will hinder our officers' ability to perform their duties. For Moloka'i, for Fiscal 2025 we respectfully asked for 140,000 to continue providing veterinary services, including spay and neuter on the island of Moloka'i for the community there. That was it.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you for your research.

MS. LABRECQUE: Yes, indeed.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Getting back to us. Oh, Member Paltin.

MS. LABRECQUE: Okay. Follow-up?

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you. I love answers and I'm sorry I have a follow-up. I wanted to clarify, so we gave them 200 fire affected cats, and they gave us back 200 friendly cats?

MS. LABRECQUE: Not yet.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Oh.

MS. LABRECQUE: Over the next two years. They know that we cannot take friendly cats right now or we can't take any cats right now, we're still trying to get rid of all the Lāhainā cats. But over the next two years, they will trade us 200 friendly cats that we can then adopt out through our standard programs.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Okay. Okay. That makes sense. And then, the 9.4 million, can that be used for the surrendered dogs?

MS. LABRECQUE: For what aspect of it? For their care?

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: All...everything fund...anything funding related to the surrendered dogs. Can any of that money be used for those dogs?

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MS. LABRECQUE: Well, it's restricted to fire response. I guess one could argue that the ones that were surrendered because of fire impact could be used for part of that. It gets a little complicated with tracking of expenses, but we could probably work something out, yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Yeah. And then as the 200 cats from Lānaʻi come back to Lāhainā, are they going to pay you 2,250 to take those cats?

MS. LABRECQUE: No, because for us they won't stay in our care for very long, right. We'll take them in as we can. We put cats at Petco. We have a partnership with the Cat Café Maui, and so they don't stay with us for very long. Ideally, you know, our average length of stay for cats is normally about 30 to 40 days in care, it's gone up since the fires. But they don't stay with us nearly as long as the dogs do.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: We should look into a partnership with MEDB to make the cat brochure, like come to Maui, adopt a cat, and then put it out through HTA.

MS. LABRECQUE: I love it. Okay.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thanks. Okay, thanks.

MS. LABRECQUE: Okay. Mahalo.

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

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Connie Pluchos, to be followed by Will Spence.

MS. PLUCHOS: Aloha. My name is Connie Pluchos. I'm a retired Maui Hospice Nurse. I'm also a retired Maui Home Health Nurse, but I'm here tonight representing the Kihei Aquatics Pool Deep Water program. Thank you Tom and Jared for your phone call today. Our program has been cancelled since December 2023, four months ago. In February, and since your last townhall meeting, our senior lifeguard has been returned to all of her previous duties and responsibilities, except teaching our class. Our equipment, the aqua belts, the dumbbells have all been locked up since December. For ten years, our senior lifeguard has taught deepwater aerobics while managing the Kihei pool. Many lifeguards assist her with teaching our class, which was great. We welcomed their help. We are not here to address a personal or personnel issue. We are not asking for money from the budget. The Maui County website still states that there is a year-round swim program and it lists Kihei County lifeguards to teach all forms of classes. It also states in the job description, provide...to provide instruction to all age groups. It

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also states to conduct aquatic exercise sessions for physical fitness, therapeutic sessions for general health and rehabilitation. If there has been a change, we have not yet been informed. Please return our deep water class with our senior lifeguard. Please return our County taxpayers' life belts and dumbbells. Our numbers in the deep water Kihei class vary monthly, anywhere from 200 members to 682 people. They all utilize this class. We only use the pool three hours a week. Our lifeguard, senior lifeguard, wants to teach our class. I am...I already said that I'm a retired nurse. I care deeply about the health of our community. Thank you for listening to your constituents. Please help us get our class back. . . .(applause in background) . . .

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you for being here and testifying.

MS. PLUCHOS: Thanks, Tom.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Any questions? Thank you. Next testifier. Hey, Will Spence.

MS. MCKINLEY: To be followed by Max Tornai.

MR. SPENCE: It probably works. Okay. Aloha, Councilmembers, my name is Will Spence. Tonight, I thought I would testify a little bit on real property tax rates as proposed in the Mayor's budget. A couple weeks ago I got my real property tax assessment. I opened it up, and my God, my house is worth over a million dollars. I was flabbergasted. Then I come across the Mayor's budget and I go, oh, my God, I am now in tier two and the rates are going up for that. I don't know exactly know what the impact is going to be as yet, but if you know my house, it's really plain, it's under a thousand square feet, it's 50 years old. It was an old pan abode home moved from Mākena up to Pukalani and it's, trust me, it's nothing special...gravel driveway, so I'm kind of blown away at supposedly how much it's worth. I suspect the value went up because somebody bought a house down the street. Super expensive, paid more than market, so everybody's rates went up. So, I can probably suck 'em up, but...so, I don't know what the impact is yet. But I started thinking about other people. I started...I was speaking with Councilmember Kama earlier this morning and I started poking around the real property tax website at really blue-collared neighborhoods, right around in Dream City, and I'm going that house is worth 1.6? That house is 1.2. I mean, you guys...you guys know dream city, I haven't poked around, you know, Lāhainā or Kihei too much, but a million-dollar home is--I mean, the average cost of a house now is over a million bucks. So, I'm thinking about what does it mean for impact to our really working-class people to raise the rates that much. People who are always tier one, now are tier two. It's the tier two rate has gone from \$2.00 to 2.50, you know. That's going to be a significant bite for some people.

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We're trying to keep our local people here. So, I'm not asking you to lower anything. What I'm asking is when it comes time to debate the rates, really look at the impact of what it means for local families. So, and that's my testimony. . . .(applause in background). . .

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you very much. Member Rawlins-Fernandez.

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

MR. SPENCE: Sure.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: I...I...my clarifying question is, do you understand that the real property tax rates are progressive tax. So, you don't end up only in tier one, or tier two, or tier three. It's the first million would be taxed at tier one --

MR. SPENCE: Okay.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: -- and then whatever exceeds a million would then be taxed only that excessive amount or the amount that is over a million would be taxed at tier two. But, even before then, you would subtract your homeowners exemption --

MR. SPENCE: Right.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: -- so, if your...if the valuation of your property is a million, first you would subtract 300,000, so it would be 700,000, and only the 700,000 would be taxed at tier one. So, if it's...if your property is 1.5 million, then you subtract the 300,000, so then 1.2, and a threshold of tier one is to a million, so only 200,000 would be taxed at tier two. Do you understand that?

MR. SPENCE: Okay. Yes, I do and thank you.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Okay.

MR. SPENCE: But all the same, it should really be looked at as how does this affect some of lower-income people. I know like Kahului is multi-generational, multi-families within one house. I don't know what the impact is going to be on them. So, that's...

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Agreed. And good point, but your

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testimony is live on Channel 53, and I don't want people watching your testimony to think that it's not a progressive tax.

MR. SPENCE: Okay.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: So, that everyone watching understands that it's a progressive tax, so you don't just end up in tier two and all of your valuation ends up being taxed at tier two. Mahalo.

MR. SPENCE: Okay. Thank you. Okay, Councilmembers...

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you.

MR. SPENCE: Thank you much.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you very much. Thank you. Any questions? . . . *(applause in background)*. . . Next testifier.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Max Tornai, to be followed by Peter Trunk.

MR. TORNAI: Aloha, everybody. Thank you guys so much for being here and grappling with so many important issues. I can't even imagine the responsibility that is...that goes with all of that. I'm here to testify on a couple...on behalf of a couple different organizations that I wear different hats for, so I'll try to be kind of quick. But, first, I'm the Development Director for Habitat for Humanity Maui, and I'm here to specifically speak in support of our grant that's in the Mayor's Proposed Budget for \$250,000 for safety-related repairs for low-income kūpuna and disabled homeowners in Maui County. I could go on a number of different tangents and examples of some of the very difficult living conditions of some of our elderly residents and citizens are dealing with, and the low-income segment of that population is struggling incredibly more than, you know, the other people in the population, just because you don't have the resources to get yourself out of these types of progressive safety and health situations such as mold and rot, and all sorts of different things, including fall prevention. So, that program works with the specific needs of the applicant, the qualifying applicant, and it can be anywhere from a wheelchair ramp to other fall prevention, strips on stairs, and the shower...tub-to-shower modifications. And it's incredibly needed and appreciated by our elderly community that is accessing those services. Secondly, I'm also the Grants Director for Hāli'imaile Pineapple Company. We do the Maui Gold Pineapple Upcountry, and I just wanted to speak in support of the Department of Agriculture in general. Obviously, it's very, very important to Maui County. But, with the new department this year, we have been able to access some funding that has gone a long way and I can only encourage more support

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for our ag community in general. And then lastly, I'm also on the alumni council for Ka Ipu Kukui and I know that they have some funds that are earmarked in the Mayor's proposed budget and I can only speak in favor of that program just with the support that they've been able to provide over so many years to . . .(timer sounds). . . our upcoming leaders. Thank you so much.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Good job. Any questions? Member Paltin, then Member Cook.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you for your testimony and your service. Did you get moved to Kihei?

MR. TORNAI: I lost my home in Lāhainā too, so we're in Kihei now.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Oh, okay. By choice?

MR. TORNAI: Well, yes. Directly after the fires, we were South side and my son did very well with Kamali'i. We enrolled him kind of right away to get him some sense of normalcy. They did incredible and so we...yeah, tried to figure out how to stay in Kihei for that...pretty much that purpose.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Good.

MR. TORNAI: Yeah.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Member Cook.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Thank you for coming this evening and thank you for being so involved in three different things. I'm curious for Habitat, is it \$250,000 grant?

MR. TORNAI: Yes, sir.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: And how many homes or how many...it must vary a great deal, but how much is the average?

MR. TORNAI: Yeah, so our average is for material use is about \$4,200 per project. If you include personnel cost we're up to about \$8,200 per project, and it does vary significantly. Sometimes it's just grab bars in somebody's shower for fall prevention, sometimes it's the whole roof replacement, and you know, digging out rotted floorboards, putting in new subflooring, so...and running water, that type of thing that can increase the cost substantially.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: That's really good value and that's helping a whole lot of people. Thank you.

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MR. TORNAI: Yes, I agree.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Member Kama.

VICE-CHAIR KAMA: Thank you, Chair. Thank you for being here. So, my question is, in your testimony you said you do...Habitat does a lot of rehab?

MR. TORNAI: Yes.

VICE-CHAIR KAMA: So, that's just rehab, right? That's not tear down and rebuild? Do you folks do that?

MR. TORNAI: So, we do have a tear down and rebuild program as well.

VICE-CHAIR KAMA: You do?

MR. TORNAI: The funds that this particular grant --

VICE-CHAIR KAMA: Is for rehab?

MR. TORNAI: Is providing...is...so, services at no charge to the participant and it could be...it wouldn't be a full tear down and rebuild. That's a different program, but it's...can be pretty substantial home modification like a whole new roof if necessary. Sometimes the home is so dilapidated, it's on the verge of being condemned, and that's just too...too big for this program.

VICE-CHAIR KAMA: So, then you'd have to go into the tear down and rebuild.

MR. TORNAI: Right, and then we'd go through that process of removing the condemned or just, you know, the --

VICE-CHAIR KAMA: Hauling it all away.

MR. TORNAI: -- unsafe house and then we'd go through our normal, you know, new home build program.

VICE-CHAIR KAMA: I want to talk to you more about that, but can I talk to you about that offline? Look it. You're all saying, yeah, let's not have this conversation. Okay.

MR. TORNAI: Absolutely, of course.

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CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you.

VICE-CHAIR KAMA: I will get your information. Thank you.

MR. TORNAI: Sure.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Oh, sorry, here's Member Johnson.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Thank you, Chair. Thank you for your testimony. Thank you for all the work that you do for our kūpuna. Is 250,000 enough?

MR. TORNAI: It is not enough.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Did you ask for anything more than that when you spoke with the Administration?

MR. TORNAI: We did not ask for more. Right now, for the amount of construction capacity that we have for everything else that's going on, it would be difficult for us to spend more.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: I see, I see.

MR. TORNAI: But absolutely. The need is there, so probably in future years we might ramp up --

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Do you service the outer islands, Lānaʻi, Molokaʻi?

MR. TORNAI: Yes, mm hmm, absolutely.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: And Lānaʻi folks can apply for this program as well?

MR. TORNAI: Absolutely, yes, sir.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Okay, so it's a capacity issue if you had more folks, then you could do more is what I'm hearing?

MR. TORNAI: Yeah, yeah, there has been a challenge in hiring qualified individuals --

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: I understand that.

MR. TORNAI: But absolutely. The more funding we get the more we can increase capacity. Sure.

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COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Thank you so much. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you very much. Oh, Member Sinenci.

COUNCILMEMBER SINENCI: Thanks, Max. Just a follow up on Member Johnson's question. Are you guys able to utilize that funding to leverage for maybe federal or state funding?

MR. TORNAI: For the safety program or for...yeah, for the safety program. We have tried before to go and partnership with the program through HUD for senior retrofits. We didn't get that grant, that was a couple years ago. Now that we have a bit more traction with them, COA, we've been doing it for several years, maybe it's worth reapplying. But, yeah for safety repairs, we didn't get federal funding.

COUNCILMEMBER SINENCI: It just seems that rehabbing would be--I mean, even though the costs are going up, it's less expensive than actually a rebuild.

MR. TORNAI: Absolutely. Yeah, yeah. And if you invest now before a situation gets worse, than you're saving money on a number of different ways.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: All right. No more questions? Thank you very much.

MR. TORNAI: Aloha. Thank you so much. . . .*(applause in background)*. . .

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Next testifier. How many more testifiers do we have? If there's a lot, then I'll take...oh, okay.

MS. MCKINLEY: There are currently three more signed...four more signed up.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Oh, okay. Thank you. Thank you.

MR. TRUNK: I'm the short guy, yeah. Good evening. I'm Peter Trunk. I own a bed and breakfast, and this is about the proposed increase on the bed and breakfast tax. A bed and breakfast is a small business. It's like a mom-and-pop store. It's a local business. The money I make I spent here on Maui. It doesn't go to the mainland. So, if this proposal goes through, it's addressing or targeting the wrong people. It's targeting the victims, the Lāhainā fire victims. How come? Very simple. When Lāhainā burned down, we got very lucky. We didn't lose our life. We didn't lose our house. But the next day, we lost all our income. With one sentence from the Governor, "Don't come to Maui", and they didn't come, and they still don't come. We had to slash our rates into half and we are still struggling to find enough visitors who come to us, visitors who spent their money

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in local restaurants and not at resorts. So, you can do the math. We are struggling to survive. If we get an additional taxes, then we might go under, and that's very unfair. If you guys need more money in property tax, why not address the right people, the people who own short-term rentals who live on the mainland. They're big companies who buy properties here because they take advantage of our low property tax. And they say, oh, good, then we make more money. That money goes out. That money goes to the mainland, compared to us, we live here, we spend our money here. So, don't target the victims, please. Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you very much. . . .(applause in background). . . Any questions for the testifier? Member Rawlins-Fernandez.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Aloha. Mahalo for your testimony. I...my question is regarding the long-term rental --

MR. TRUNK: Yes.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: -- classification and exemption, it's a 200,000 exemption from your property value with a lower tax rate with a long-term rental classification.

MR. TRUNK: Right.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: I just wanted to see if you were aware of that?

MR. TRUNK: When FEMA offered long-term rentals, that we should offer long-term rentals, there were three companies. I wrote to all three companies and offered our guest house. One company replied, made an offer. I said I'd take it and that was the last I heard. I never heard from them again.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: So, aside from the fire, this long-term rental rate has existed pre-fires.

MR. TRUNK: We know that.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Okay.

MR. TRUNK: But I operate since 2018 and we lost all the exemptions right away and we pay GE taxes a lot, TAT twice, we have to have liability insurance, and now with our insurance...homeowner's insurance just cancelled. So, we don't know what will happen. But we might not survive this and if they put on additional taxes, we definitely will not survive, and I'll just have to close the shop, and it's

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another local small business...another mom-and-pop store gone.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo. Mahalo, Chair.

MR. TRUNK: Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Thank you very much. . . . *(applause in background)*.  
. Next testifier.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Eli Wynne, to be followed by Susan Thomson.

MR. WYNNE: It's weird being probably the youngest here, I think. So, . . . *(applause in background)*. . . thank you, thank you. My name is Eli Wynne. I'm here on behalf of Maui STEMworks, specifically the agricultural internship that they've been doing, so I'm adding on to the pile of all the people that have been talking about the great work that STEMWorks does. My brother is in the program. Everyone...a lot of people I'm close friends with are involved...it's a great program. The agricultural...I'm here to talk to you about the Maui STEMworks agricultural internship, what it does, why it's important, and why it's useful. Maui has a large and growing agricultural industry. We've always had it and recently our Governors, both Ige and--I'm really bad with names--Green, have been focusing insignificantly on expanding agricultural statewide for the day when the boats will no longer come, if that ever happens, God forbid. We have a wide variety of agricultural internship opportunities from smaller farmers, like the one I work for, Mother Mushrooms, which I'll get into in a minute, and larger organizations like Maui Pono, and larger farms Upcountry. This sector of our economy has always been here and will always be here due to our unique location on the planet as a place that it is able to grow 24/7, 365 days a year. STEMworks Maui is a program that pays students from 2,000 to 180...1,800, sorry, for ten weeks for working 15 to 20 hours a week. I'm currently working with this program for the second time. My first time was in 2021, during fall. That was COVID...sorry, 2022 during COVID, which was very important to me because it was basically the only social interaction I actually had besides my immediate family because you actually were able to go out and do stuff, which was very important during that time, so this program is a little special to me. I'm doing it again and I'm working with Mother Mushrooms. They are a local company based in Upcountry. They are, as far as I understand the only commercial grower of mushrooms on island. They produce more than can supply this island of oyster mushrooms and lion's mane, both of which...I don't like mushrooms, but they're actually pretty good. They ship a small amount currently over to O'ahu and they are going to be expanding that and I've been part of that. This is important to all of us because if we want to keep kids on this island, fundamentally, you need them to work and

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you need to work in a way that they like, they can appreciate, they have experience in, and they can make enough money to actually stay here with their family and the people they know and the people they care about. And STEMworks does this, not only because it teaches you practical hands-on experience with what you're doing working with mentors who are trying to teach you as part of this program, but also because you meet those people. . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . You meet people who know this and work this and will offer you jobs afterwards. And I think also, personally, it just gives a sense of community of solidarity of knowing the people who keep our island fed and keep our island going, and I think I've gone a little bit over time, but I think that's all I got. And I wanted to say, she left, but I really do support that homeless program that she was talking about earlier. We need something like that on this island, and I think I know people who have become homeless, we all have, it's a tragedy, and we need a real solution to it. . . .*(applause in background)*. . .

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

COUNCILMEMBER SINENCI: Thank you, Eli, for your testimony this evening. I was just wondering are you aware of the Department of Agriculture's Micro-Grants?

MR. WYNNE: No, I'm not actually.

COUNCILMEMBER SINENCI: Oh, okay. You can get some information from us later, but it's just for our young farmers like yourself, just some extra money to start up your farm. Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you.

MR. WYNNE: Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you very much. . . .*(applause in background)*. . . Next testifier.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Susan Thomson, to be followed by Zandra Amaral Crouse.

MS. THOMSON: Aloha and good evening. I want to thank you so much for being here this evening. I also want to thank you for all the hard work you're doing and, you know, every day I'm sure you're facing many, many challenges. I'm here this evening for as myself. I don't represent anybody else. And I'm here because of the real property taxes for resident owner-occupied proposed by the Mayor. And I don't know if any of you saw the recent Maui News article from Friday, April 5th and on the front page it states single-family home sales and median prices stay

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high. And if you had a chance to read it, it states that the median family single-family home on Maui now is a million three. It's...and for condos, it's a million three. For single-family homes since last year it's gone up almost ten percent. For condos, it's actually gone up almost 63 percent. So, you know, the prices have significantly gone up in the last year. The rate last year, I believe, was \$1.90 for the lowest tier rate for tier one. So, if you have a home that's a million three and you have the \$300,000 exemption, it takes it down to a million dollars, which you're going to be taxed on. So, the proposed rate of \$2.50, from your change if it was below a million, actually goes up 32 percent. So, I don't understand why the resident owner-occupied is being targeted with such a high increase. It doesn't sound like very much, 60 cents. It is a lot of money when you add...that all these properties now are worth over a million dollars. Maui, you know, used to be you could find something for half a million, maybe you can, but, you know, like the other gentleman said, everything's expensive. And so, I'd really like to encourage you, you know, like he said that the impact this is going to have on everyone who lives here. Not every, you know, there's not a lot of rich people and not everybody's rich. A lot of people are struggling. A lot of people are leaving. A lot of people are dipping into their retirement savings to try and stay, try and support their children. The property tax, to have it go up so significantly in one year, 32 percent, you know, with...and with the price increase going up so high, that you should be able to off-set it, you know. So, you're getting more money and you're...but you're charging more tax, you know, so it doesn't make sense. I don't...I'm having a hard time understanding it and I know it's just the proposal and that's why I'm here this evening. I know that you...you will come back with something, you know, a compromise somewhere. But I would really like to just encourage you to think about a couple of things is maybe consider that, one, increase tier one to two million, and that would cut, you know, the people whose properties in Kahului are a million and six. It would help offset that. . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . The second one is increase the homeowner's exemption from 300,000 to 500,000 and then keep the tax rate at a \$1.90, maybe increase it to \$2.00. But \$2.50 just seems really excessive. I also support the mansion tax, or whatever, as you see the things that are being built, you know, around 15 million, 20 million, 49 million, it's obscene, you know, and you know, it's...it breaks your heart, you know. I've been on Maui 52 years, I've seen a lot of changes, it makes me cry, you know. So, I really, really support all you are doing, you know, my heart goes out to the Lāhainā fire families. We've been...it's a challenge. It's really challenging. I'm going to get emotional. So, I'm here today just to ask you to really think about the power that you have and the role that you play and the lives of so many here on Maui. Thank you. . . .*(timer sounds)*. . .

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you, Susan. Anybody have questions for her? . . .*(applause in background)*. . . Seeing none. Thank you. Zandra Amaral --

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MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, she's --

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Are you the last testifier?

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, she's currently the last testifier signed up.

MS. CROUSE: Thank you. A little bit more down. Okay. Perfect. You are so kind. Aloha. Aloha, my friends. It...I'd like to start off in thanking you all, especially Councilmember Tamara, the mother of Lāhainā. We lost our families ancestral home that we had over 200 years when my Portuguese family migrated from the Azores and Madeira. Lāhainā was the harbor they were taken to. So, I'd like to thank all of you and I'd like...I really would like to let the public know that our community operates on a finite budget and that money come from us. If we do not want to be taxed more, we got to sacrifice somewhere and that's the judicious and fiduciary responsibility that you and the Mayor, the Legislators and the Senators and the President has, and yet there are infinite needs. And I know that can be very humbling for all of you when you sit in your committees and try to figure out how...with your hearts wanting to provide all the wants and the needs of our community. I am really appreciative of Habitat for Humanity. I had the privilege of volunteering with them. Of course, I was an unskilled worker. They gave me a gun with bullets inside, they took that away real quick. But I support that. I support any program. STEM, I support, only because some of you in fact, I think Alice you remember and Yuki, when you guys presented those awards for the STEM people that won that international program, yeah, from Maui. Yeah, and O'ahu just won. So, I support that. I support all programs that has to do with supporting our children, our local children, born and raised, five, six, seven, nine generations. These are the people that we need to worry about. Keep them safe. Keep them housed. Keep them here. Right now, I think our priorities should be in putting all of our children and family members of Lāhainā into homes. I am the principal broker for four hotels in Hawai'i, two in Kā'anapali, in Kapalua, and two on the island of Kaua'i. And I'd like to thank the owners of these units who came out in force, to nurture our employees, to help them find long-term housing. . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . There are many needs, but in closing, I humbly ask all of you. take care of the needs and if you can, the wants. But we as a community need to understand people's lives, people's safety, and their ability to lead a wholesome life has got to be our priority in the budgeting of this session. I thank all of you from the bottom of my heart. Mahalo.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you, Zandra. . . .*(applause in background)*. . . Anybody have questions for her? Seeing none.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, no one else is signed up to testify. Would you like to do a last call? If anyone else would like to testify, please come approach the microphone

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now. Chair, seeing no one.

**. . .END OF PUBLIC TESTIMONY. . .**

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you, everybody for being here and listening, learning. It's being filmed on *Akakū*, so you can learn and listen again. Thank you, Members, for being here. I appreciate all of you who came from Lānaʻi, Molokaʻi, Hāna, that's how important all of you are here in South Maui. So, at this time, this meeting is now adjourned.

**ACTION: DEFER** pending further discussion.

ADJOURN: 7:58 p.m.

APPROVED:

  
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YUKI LEI K. SUGIMURA, Chair  
Budget, Finance, and Economic  
Development Committee

bfed:min:240411-South Maui:slv/ta

Transcribed by: Terianne Arreola

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CERTIFICATION

I, Terianne Arreola, hereby certify that pages 1 through 47 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 20th day of April 2024, in Makawao, Hawai'i.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Terianne Arreola