

Budget, Finance, and Economic Development Committee (2025-2027) on 2025-04-21 9:00 AM

Meeting Time: 04-21-25 09:00

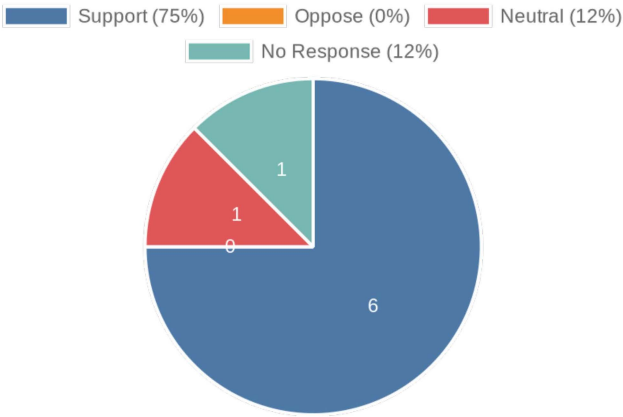
eComments Report

Meetings	Meeting Time	Agenda Items	Comments	Support	Oppose	Neutral
Budget, Finance, and Economic Development Committee (2025-2027) on 2025-04-21 9:00 AM	04-21-25 09:00	2	8	6	0	1

Sentiments for All Meetings

The following graphs display sentiments for comments that have location data. Only locations of users who have commented will be shown.

Overall Sentiment



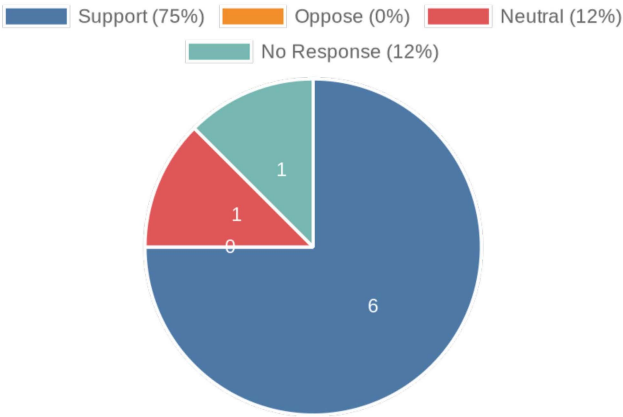
Budget, Finance, and Economic Development Committee (2025-2027) on 2025-04-21 9:00 AM
04-21-25 09:00

Agenda Name	Comments	Support	Oppose	Neutral
A G E N D A	1	0	0	0
BFED-1 Bill 41 (2025) PROPOSED FISCAL YEAR 2026 BUDGET FOR THE COUNTY OF MAUI (BFED-1)	7	6	0	1

Sentiments for All Agenda Items

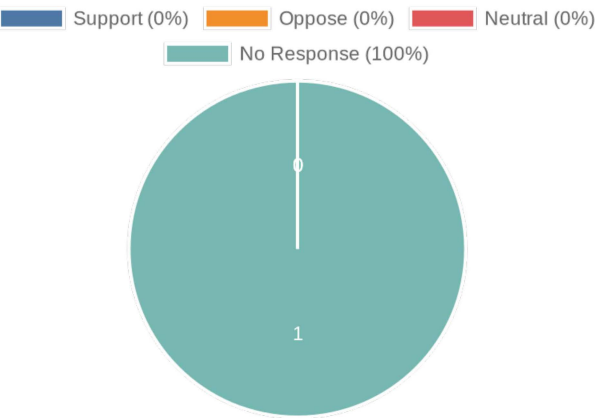
The following graphs display sentiments for comments that have location data. Only locations of users who have commented will be shown.

Overall Sentiment



Agenda Item: eComments for A G E N D A

Overall Sentiment

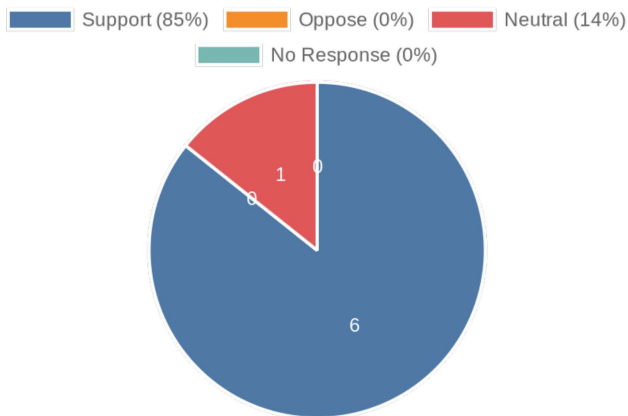


BFED Committee

Location:
Submitted At: 4:30pm 04-17-25

Testimonies received from BFED Committee as of 4:30 p.m. 04/17/2025

Overall Sentiment



Guest User

Location:

Submitted At: 12:18pm 04-18-25

Support Maui's Wedding & Event Industry

My name is Scott Doran, and I am the owner and operator of Maui DJ Services and Strike A Pose Maui. I'm writing to express my strong support for the proposed \$300,000 allocation in the county budget to promote our wedding and event sector and help host the upcoming Engage Summit.

Over the years, our industry has contributed immensely to Maui's economy—bringing in millions of dollars annually, supporting countless small businesses, and providing thousands of quality jobs. This has been accomplished largely without formal advertising campaigns or government assistance. Instead, it's been built by the hard work, creativity, and dedication of local professionals committed to delivering world-class experiences right here on our island.

The last five years have tested us like never before—through natural disasters, a global pandemic, and economic uncertainty. Yet, the wedding and event industry has remained resilient, continuing to generate income for local vendors, venues, florists, musicians, caterers, and countless other small businesses.

Now, we have a unique opportunity to showcase Maui on a global stage through the Engage Summit. This event would not only bring direct revenue to the island but also serve as a long-term investment in our brand as a premier destination. With Mayor Bissen's support, I respectfully urge the Council to stand with us and approve this critical funding.

Your support can help amplify the voices of local entrepreneurs, ensure a more sustainable and equitable economic future, and allow us to continue representing Maui with the spirit of aloha that draws people here from around the world.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Warm regards,
Scott Doran
Owner/Operator
Maui DJ Services & Strike A Pose Maui

Ariel Quiroz

Location:
Submitted At: 12:26am 04-18-25

Support Maui's Wedding & Event Industry

Aloha Council Members,

My name is Ariel Quiroz, owner of Ariel Quiroz Art A.K.A. Maui Wedding Art, and I have been proudly serving the Maui community for over a decade. I am reaching out to strongly encourage your support for the proposed \$300,000 allocation in the budget designed to promote and strengthen Maui's vital Wedding & Event Industry.

Our industry is primarily made up of small, locally owned businesses like mine, providing essential employment and meaningful opportunities for thousands of Maui residents. Each wedding and event significantly contributes to our local economy, ensuring prosperity and well-being remain firmly rooted within our community.

Furthermore, our work strongly aligns with the principles of regenerative tourism—promoting respectful, culturally mindful, and intentional travel. This approach nurtures deeper connections with Maui's unique culture, landscapes, and community, fostering sustainable economic growth and cultural preservation.

Given the unprecedented challenges we have faced over the past five years—including the pandemic, economic uncertainty, and devastating fires—your support is more critical now than ever.

Please vote in favor of this essential budget allocation. Your support will help our industry recover and allow us to continue enriching the lives of both our local community members and visitors who choose Maui for their most memorable life moments.

Mahalo for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Warm regards,

Ariel QuirozMaui Wedding Art, Lahaina, HI

Jonathan Helton

Location:
Submitted At: 3:11pm 04-17-25

Please see attached testimony on budget and real property taxes.

Guest User

Location:
Submitted At: 2:05pm 04-17-25

Aloha Council Members,

My name is Carolee Higashino and I am President and business owner of A White Orchid Wedding, Inc., Wailea Weddings and also operate a boutique Maui venue called The White Orchid Beach House. I am a familiar face to you all as the Makena venue I am speaking of was recently permitted for use by Maui County and you the council witnessed the frustration of that daunting and extensive process with me first hand.

In the interim of this process both my companies and our industry have clearly witnessed the decline in visitors and our businesses literally faced the very worst of times economically. With the lasting effects of the covid

pandemic coupled with the Lahaina wildfires we are all struggling to gain momentum to simply stay in business on this island. Sadly many have not been able to sustain. My company currently employs 5 full time staff members whom are all local members of our community. I support them with full health benefits and a 401K plan and have done my very best to retain the longevity of their employment. Sadly I have lost some along the way. In addition WOW supports over 200 local vendors and services on our island alone whom rely on our services for employment.

Having been in this business now just over 30 years, I have always found that no matter what we produce as a whole, we have never been given the recognition nor assistance to grow this industry here in Maui County, let alone the State of Hawaii. We have all independently invested our own resources to bring this massive business platform to our community and have successfully done so in great numbers. With well over millions of dollars generated to our County annually we are a significant participant for our economic recovery.

In an effort to 'stay afloat' we are all doing everything within our means to stimulate our economy thus allowing families here on the island - stay on the island. We simply cannot do it alone. I'm writing today to urge you to support the \$300,000 budget allocation for the Maui wedding and events industry. In fact I would like to see more funding come to our industry as well knowing the return to our community will be well worth it. This first stepping stone will help enable us to once again gain the global recognition as a world class wedding destination once again.

I realize many are struggling on the island and we are here to support local business. It is with your consideration that this might be a possibility for us all. I appreciate each and every one of you as I a too have seen what you all are faced with on the daily. I am grateful for your time in reading these letters of support.

Mahalo Nui Loa,
Carolee Higashino
Owner, A White Orchid Wedding, Inc.

Guest User

Location:

Submitted At: 6:14am 04-17-25

Aloha Council Members,

My name is Jackie Cavallo, and I'm the owner of Hair Anywhere Maui, a mobile bridal hair and makeup business that has been serving couples across the island for over 15 years. I'm reaching out today to ask for your continued support of the Maui Wedding & Event industry—a vital and deeply rooted part of our local economy and community.

Our industry is made up primarily of small, locally owned businesses like mine, and together we generate millions in revenue each year. That income stays here on Maui, supporting local families, providing jobs, and helping sustain other small businesses we collaborate with, from florists and planners to photographers and venues.

Weddings also align with the values of regenerative tourism. We serve clients who come to Maui not just for beauty, but for meaning—to honor the island, its culture, and their connection to it. We encourage intentional, respectful travel, and we take great pride in representing Maui with the care it deserves.

After enduring the hardships of the pandemic and the heartbreaking losses from the fires, our industry is still in recovery. We're asking for your advocacy and support so we can continue doing what we do best—welcoming guests with aloha and supporting our community from the inside out.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Warmly,
Jackie Cavallo

Bridal Hair & Makeup Artist | Maui, HI Hair Anywhere Maui
Instagram | Facebook | WeddingWire | Google

Guest User

Location:

Submitted At: 5:37pm 04-16-25

To the Maui County Council,

As owners of The Catered Coconut, we are honored to be part of a deeply rooted, vibrant, and hardworking community that brings dreams to life here on Maui. Our small business was born from a simple idea — to offer fresh coconuts at weddings and events — but it has grown into something far greater: a signature experience that guests remember and talk about for months and even years after. We've found our niche by showing up with authenticity, warmth, and intention, creating moments that are not just beautiful, but deeply felt. This is not just about coconuts — it's about connection, storytelling, and the magic of Maui hospitality.

The impact of what we do ripples far beyond our business name. We provide meaningful work to our team, we inspire others with our creativity, and we help set the tone for what it means to celebrate on this island with care and integrity. The Maui wedding and event industry is a collective 'ohana — one that works tirelessly, and often while very tired, to uplift the visitor experience and support one another behind the scenes. In the wake of years of challenge and recovery, now is the time to recognize this industry not as an afterthought, but as a vital contributor to our local economy and cultural reputation. We ask that you take our work seriously — not just The Catered Coconut, but the thousands of small, heart-led businesses like ours that make Maui a premier destination for celebration. Supporting this funding is not charity — it's an investment in what is already working, beautifully.

With Aloha,
Catherine Duncan & Michael Lynn
The Catered Coconut

Guest User

Location:

Submitted At: 4:38pm 04-16-25

Testimony in Support of Funding for the Maui Wedding Industry – FY2025 Budget

Aloha Council Members,

My name is Karma Hill, and I am a proud resident and business owner in Maui County. I'm writing today to urge you to support the \$300,000 budget allocation for the Maui wedding and events industry.

I own and operate a wedding planning and photography business that serves couples from around the world who choose to celebrate one of life's most meaningful moments on our island. My company alone employs 15 people here in Maui County—7 of whom are full-time employees earning competitive pay and receiving health benefits. Prior to COVID and the Lahaina fires, we employed 20. That number doesn't include the over 30 independent contractors we work with regularly—local florists, officiants, musicians, stylists, and other small businesses who support their families through the wedding industry. For every wedding we plan, dozens of local hands are involved. Each event generates work, income, and opportunity for our community.

The Maui wedding and event industry is not only large and united—it's built primarily of small, locally owned businesses. Collectively, we contribute millions of dollars annually to the island's economy. More importantly, a significant portion of that income stays on Maui, directly supporting local families, services, and our small business ecosystem.

Beyond the numbers, our industry plays a vital role in promoting regenerative tourism. We work closely with couples to ensure their wedding experience is respectful, intentional, and aligned with the values of m_lama __ina and cultural reverence. We advocate for meaningful travel—experiences that leave people more connected to this land and its people.

However, the last five years have tested us deeply—from the pandemic to economic uncertainty to the heartbreaking destruction of Lahaina. The impact has been immense, and recovery continues to be slow. We need your help now more than ever.

With your support, we have a real opportunity to build a model event industry grounded in community, culture, and care. We can continue to host weddings and life celebrations that uplift our people, steward our land, and help Maui lead the way in values-driven tourism.

Mahalo for your time and consideration. I deeply appreciate the work you do for our island and hope you will stand with the thousands of families and small businesses that make up the Maui wedding industry.

With gratitude,

Karma Hill

Owner, Karma Hill Photography / Simple Maui Wedding

BFED Committee

From: Lauren Amano <lauren.amano@meoinc.org>
Sent: Thursday, April 17, 2025 10:39 AM
To: BFED Committee
Subject: Testimonies for MEO Headstart
Attachments: Testimonies_ECS.pdf

You don't often get email from lauren.amano@meoinc.org. [Learn why this is important](#)

Aloha,

Attached please find testimonies in support of MEO Head Start.

Mahalo,

Lauren Amano

Executive Assistant
Maui Economic Opportunity, Inc.
99 Mahalani Street
Wailuku, HI 96793
Ph: [\(808\) 243-4306](tel:(808)243-4306)
Fax: [\(808\) 249-2991](tel:(808)249-2991)

lauren.amano@meoinc.org
www.meoinc.org

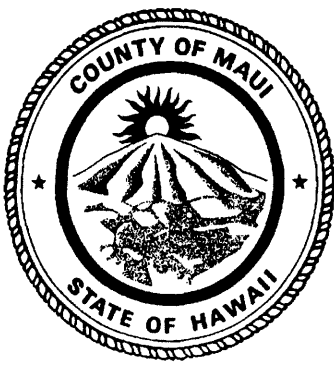
MEO's mission is to strengthen the community while helping people in need restore their hope, reach their potential, and enrich their lives.



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MEO's mission is to strengthen the community while helping people in need restore their hope, empowering them to reach their potential and enrich their lives.

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COUNTY OF MAUI
Office of the Mayor
Fiscal Year 2026
Community Budget Request

FOR STAFF USE ONLY	NO.

PLEASE PRINT

Name: Carlyrose Alconcel

Email Address: carlyrosea@gmail.com

Phone: 8082692013

Mailing Address: _____

City/Zip: 96793

I Represent: ☐ **Myself**

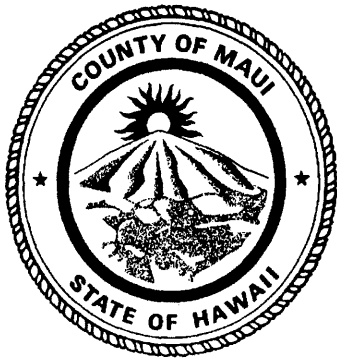
☒ **Organization** MEO Head Start - Kahului, UHMC, Wailuku A, and Wailuku B centers

Request/Issue: Aloha, I am so grateful for the continuance of the MEO Headstart program

This is my second year having one of my children enrolled in the program and it has
not only helped me provide an education/care for my children but they also help you
in other areas as well. The program does quarterly at home check in's to make sure
your family has everything they need and also guide us towards the right people for
financial/mental/medical help as well. MEO Headstart has allowed me to stay enrolled
in school and also hold a job while not having to worry about where I could afford to
send my children to preschool. They have allowed me to help financially secure a
future for my children while not having to pay for the program. The program also helps
prepare children for Kindergarten which a lot of elementary schools appreciate. It
provides our children to adjust and receive a better education in grade school because
their teacher will not have to teach them about classroom etiquette.

Funding Request (if known): \$ _____

Responsible County Department: Human Concerns



COUNTY OF MAUI
Office of the Mayor
Fiscal Year 2026
Community Budget Request

FOR STAFF USE ONLY	NO.

PLEASE PRINT

Name:

Jasmine Le

Email Address:

jasminevule99@gmail.com

Phone:

609 946 4181

Mailing Address:

62 uahaa pl Wailuku HI

City/Zip:

96793

I Represent:

☐

Myself

☒

Organization

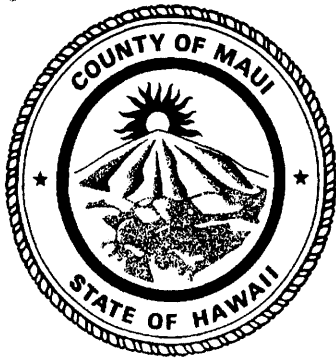
MEO Head Start - Kahului, UHMC, Wailuku A, and Wailuku B centers

Request/Issue:

MEO (Wailuku A) has had a big impact on my family and many others in the community. I request to keep funding and MEO open. MEO helps many families with full time working parents to afford any type of financials to live in Hawaii. MEO isn't just for "babysitting" or "daycare" but also sets a tone and schedule for all children attending. MEO teachers help structure and guide the children before they head to a full time school/classroom. MEO is wonderful and helps the community. I am very thankful for the staff at Wailuku A.

Funding Request (if known): \$

Responsible County Department: Human Concerns



COUNTY OF MAUI
Office of the Mayor
Fiscal Year 2026
Community Budget Request

FOR STAFF USE ONLY	NO

PLEASE PRINT

Name:

Destiny Mahulu

Email Address:

mm7@hawaii.edu

Phone:

808 856 4053

Mailing Address:

447 Kamehameha Avenue

City/Zip:

96732 Kahului

I Represent: ☐ Myself

☒ Organization

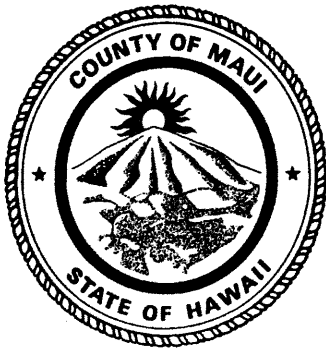
MEO Head Start - Kahului, UHMC, Wailuku A, and Wailuku B centers

Request/Issue:

Aloha my son has been utilizing this program for two years. He's learned so much and I hope my younger children will be able to experience what my oldest has with his teachers. Our keiki should be able to learn this with the resources we have available. Mahalo for your time

Funding Request (if known): \$

Responsible County Department: Human Concerns



COUNTY OF MAUI
Office of the Mayor
Fiscal Year 2026
Community Budget Request

AS APPLIED APPROPRIATE NO.

PLEASE PRINT

Name: Marissa Lising

Email Address: aymowissa@aol.com Phone: 743-1978

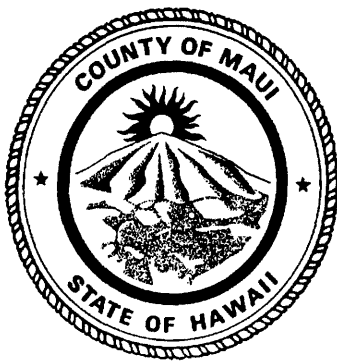
Mailing Address: 1385 Kakae Pl City/Zip: Wailuku 96793

I Represent: ☐ Myself
☒ Organization MEO Head Start

Request/Issue: MEO headstart has helped our family by being able to have my child attend school, while I go to college myself, my child loves her friends & she loves to learn. She has learned so much as far as writing, learning her numbers & letters, and making a lot of friends in which it has extended her vocabulary impeccably. She loves to ~~attend~~ be able to attend school, she loves it so much she wants to attend on the weekends and asks me everyday if she can go to school. Her teachers have done an amazing job & continue everyday to help incorporate new ~~ways~~ ways to learn that are fun!

Funding Request (if known): \$

Responsible County Department: Department of Human Concerns



COUNTY OF MAUI
Office of the Mayor
Fiscal Year 2026
Community Budget Request

FOR STAFF ONLY	NO
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PLEASE PRINT

Name:

Julie Vida

Email Address:

Crownjewels0910@gmail.com

Phone:

808 2054527

Mailing Address:

423 Nihou St.

City/Zip:

Kahului 96793

I Represent:

☐

Myself

☒

Organization

MEO Head Start - Kahului, UHMC, Wailuku A, and Wailuku B centers

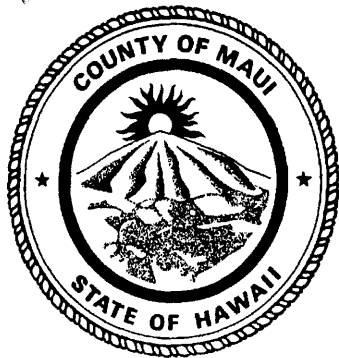
Request/Issue:

I am so very grateful for Wailuku A MEO.

I couldn't imagine Maui without this school. All 5 of my kids + 3 of my grandkids attended these schools. They are awesome wonderful caring and very great @ teaching our children. I truly believe our kids are smarter and better off with preschool. It's a wonderful & exceptional program and our kids will be very sad without it. My ohana really enjoyed their time here.

Funding Request (if known): \$

Responsible County Department: Human Concerns



COUNTY OF MAUI
Office of the Mayor
Fiscal Year 2026
Community Budget Request

FOR STAFF USE ONLY	NO.

PLEASE PRINT

Name:

Chantelyn Pieper-keahi

Email Address:

taebetz.cp@gmail.com

Phone:

725-268-3164

Mailing Address:

327 N. Market St. Unit C
Wailuku

City/Zip:

96793

I Represent:

☐

Myself

☒

Organization

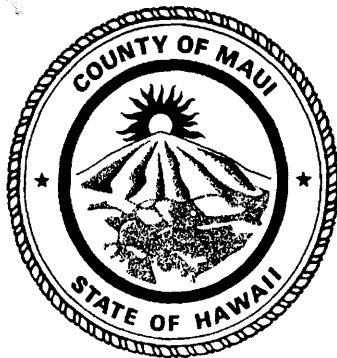
MEO Head Start - Kahului, UHMC, Wailuku A, and Wailuku B centers

Request/Issue:

MEO Headstart has helped my family and I
tremendously. With not being able to afford daycare or
preschool for my child, they offer free services. Amazing
teaching staff and aides. Always providing resources,
meals everyday and amazing curriculum, I couldn't be
any more grateful. This organization would have to be
the first organization that I would choose to continue providing
services for our community. My child has gained exceptional
skills and support from this MEO headstart program.
Please allow them to continue servicing our community.
Especially helpful to us single parent homes. Mahalo and
God Bless

Funding Request (if known): \$

Responsible County Department: Human Concerns



COUNTY OF MAUI
Office of the Mayor
Fiscal Year 2026
Community Budget Request

FOR STAFF USE ONLY	NO.

PLEASE PRINT

Name:

Eryck Tunoa.

Email Address:

tunoaeryck@gmail.com.

Phone:

971-432-0922.

Mailing Address:

1040 Kainalu place

City/Zip:

Wailuku, Hi. 96793.

I Represent:

☐

Myself

☒

Organization

MEO Head Start - Kahului, UHMC, Wailuku A, and Wailuku B centers

Request/Issue:

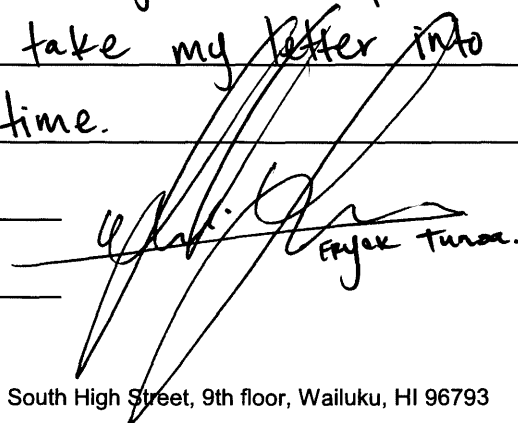
Im Writting this letter to show my
gratitude to the County of Maui Funding Department.

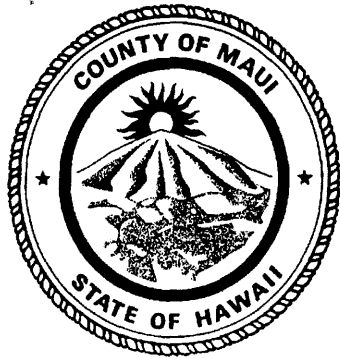
MEO HEADSTART WAILUKU A has been such a big help for
my family. MEO HEADSTART offers more then Just resources
but it gives parents the opportunity to be more Involved
With their kids projects and daily living. Staff is always
friendly and Supportive, always willing to help. This
funding allows my daughter paizley the opportunity to
learn, communicate and Socialize with other kids her.
age. it also gives single parents like myself an opportunity
to work part/full time jobs. please take my letter into
consideration, thank you for your time.

Funding Request (if known): \$

Responsible County Department:

Human Concerns


Eryck Tunoa.



COUNTY OF MAUI
Office of the Mayor
Fiscal Year 2026
Community Budget Request

FOR STAFF USE ONLY	NO

PLEASE PRINT

Name: Misty P. Kahalekai

Email Address: mkahahane1@gmail.com Phone: (808) 495-7880

Mailing Address: 55 Waipono Lane City/Zip: Wailuku 96793
Unit 204

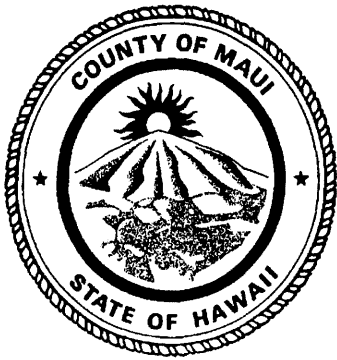
I Represent: ☐ Myself

☒ Organization MEO Head Start - Kahului, UHMC, Wailuku A, and Wailuku B centers

Request/Issue: Hello, my name is Misty P. Kahalekai. I am a
teachers Aide for Wailuku A. My two kids went
to this school. It had shaped them socially &
accidemically. It is nice that this program
funded my kids books, bags, pencils, markers.
As well as of outside play. we have new bikes
a shade to keep them cool from the sun.
This program benefits me by spending time with
my kids & it's affordable free. I need you guys
to not give up on our kids, And to keep our
funding open for MED. It's better our kids are
in school then on the streets

Funding Request (if known): \$ 20,000

Responsible County Department: Human Concerns



COUNTY OF MAUI
Office of the Mayor
Fiscal Year 2026
Community Budget Request

FOR STAFF USE ONLY	NO.

PLEASE PRINT

Name: Thuan Taake

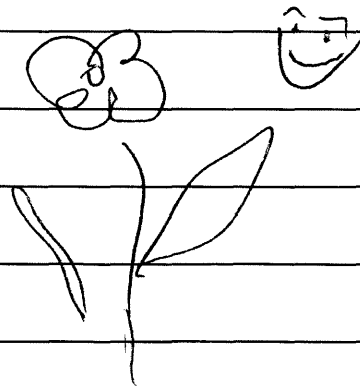
Email Address: Vy Taake 29@gmail.com Phone: 808 9899309

Mailing Address: 698 Kane Rd, Wailuku City/Zip: 96793

I Represent: ☐ Myself

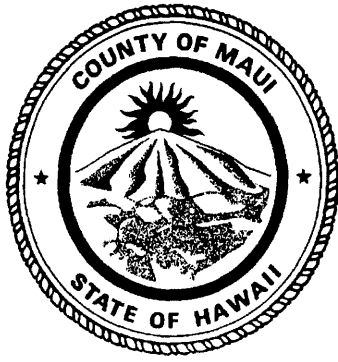
☒ Organization MEO Head Start - Kahului, UHMC, Wailuku A, and Wailuku B centers

Request/Issue: First, I would like to say Thank
you so much for excepting my son in to the meo
program, he had learned so much over the time
and I really appreciate it very much which
all the teacher and staff for your dedication
to my son education. A lot.



Funding Request (if known): \$ _____

Responsible County Department: Human Concerns



COUNTY OF MAUI
Office of the Mayor
Fiscal Year 2026
Community Budget Request

FOR STAFF USE ONLY	NO

PLEASE PRINT

Name:

Desiree Hosino

Email Address:

Morgan Mahina@gmail

Phone:

8086375989

Mailing Address:

388ANOST

City/Zip:

Kahului 96732

I Represent: ☐ Myself

☒ Organization

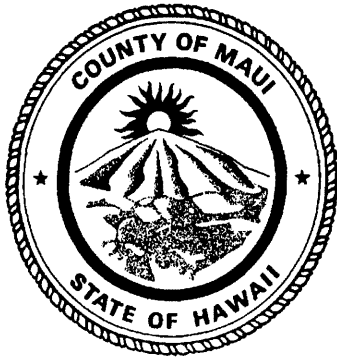
MEO Head Start - Kahului, UHMC, Wailuku A, and Wailuku B centers

Request/Issue:

MEO Head start is a amazing program and a Great foundation and start of my child & many other children's Learning & growing process. This program Has uplifted, encouraged & supported ~~me~~ ~~my~~ not only my daughter but our family as well. I've seen so much growth in my daughter while being a part of MEO Headstart. I'm so blessed that this program exist because without it I don't know how I could have afforded my daughter's schooling.

Funding Request (if known): \$

Responsible County Department: Human Concerns



COUNTY OF MAUI
Office of the Mayor
Fiscal Year 2026
Community Budget Request

FOR STAFF USE ONLY	NO.

PLEASE PRINT

Name: Marann Telan

Email Address: N/A

Phone: 808-303-8455

Mailing Address: 123 wahinepio Ave

City/Zip: 96732

I Represent: ☐ Myself

☒ Organization MEO Head Start - Kahului, UHMC, Wailuku A, and Wailuku B centers

Request/Issue: TO improve our child by writing and
reading, also, Circumstanding of ways of
sharing and its the good way
a child to get better in knowledge.
appricate of getting ~~than~~ our
children for Summer school to gain
more Knowledge.

Funding Request (if known): \$

Responsible County Department: Human Concerns

BFED Committee

From: Lauren Amano <lauren.amano@meoinc.org>
Sent: Thursday, April 17, 2025 4:15 PM
To: BFED Committee
Subject: Submission of Testimonies
Attachments: 00-FY26 Community Budget Req Form_202409091836315525 (4-13-25).pdf; Support for MEO Human Services Transportation Program - Imua Family Services.pdf; 00-FY26 Community Budget Req Form_BBBSM.pdf; 00-FY26 Community Budget Req Form MEO.pdf

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Aloha,

Attached please find testimonies in support of MEO Transportation Services.

Mahalo,

Lauren Amano

Executive Assistant

Maui Economic Opportunity, Inc.

99 Mahalani Street

Wailuku, HI 96793

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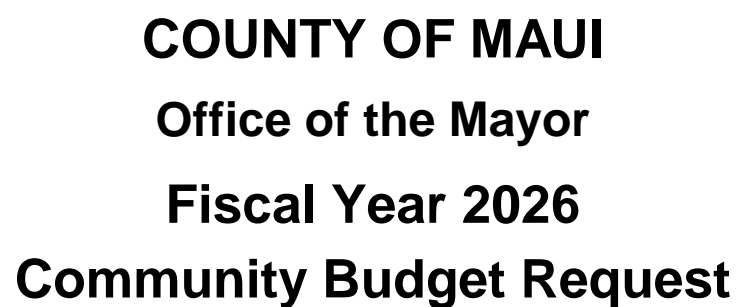
MEO's mission is to strengthen the community while helping people in need restore their hope, reach their potential, and enrich their lives.



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Name: _____

Email Address: _____ **Phone:** _____

Mailing Address: _____ **City/Zip:** _____

I Represent: ☐ Myself
☐ Organization

Request/Issue:

[illegible]

Funding Request (if known): \$

Responsible County Department:



Office of the Mayor – Budget Office

200 South High Street, 9th Floor
Wailuku, HI 96793

Re: Support for MEO Human Services Transportation Program

Aloha,

On behalf of Imua Family Services, I am writing to express our heartfelt gratitude for the indispensable support provided by Maui Economic Opportunity's Human Services Transportation Program. This service is truly a lifeline for many of our programs and the families we serve across Maui County.

One of the most significant ways MEO has supported our work is through Camp Imua, a beloved and transformative week-long overnight camp experience for children with special needs. Each year, MEO plays a critical role in making this camp possible by providing safe, reliable transportation for our campers and volunteer counselors to our campgrounds in Ke'anae. Without MEO's support, getting dozens of campers and volunteers to and from this remote location would be incredibly difficult.

Additionally, MEO enables us to offer enriching experiences during Camp Imua by transporting campers and volunteers to and from Hana Bay for our beach days—an essential and joy-filled part of the camp experience. The care, professionalism, and aloha extended by MEO's team ensures that our participants travel comfortably and safely, which provides peace of mind to families and staff alike.

Beyond Camp Imua, MEO also helps to make our preschool programming more vibrant and accessible. Their transportation services allow our keiki to explore the island through field trips that support early learning and social development. Collaborating with both the Kahului and Hāna offices has been seamless and rewarding—every interaction is marked by responsiveness, kindness, and a shared commitment to serving our community's most vulnerable populations.

MEO's Human Services Transportation Program is not just a logistical asset; it is a pillar of access and equity in our community. It empowers organizations like ours to reach further, serve more deeply, and bring meaningful opportunities to children and families who might otherwise be left behind.

We strongly support continued funding for this vital program and urge you to invest in its sustainability for years to come. MEO is a true community partner, and we are grateful every day for the role they play in helping us fulfill our mission.

With sincere appreciation,

Darris Hurst
Events and Programs Coordinator
Imua Family Services

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Dean Wong

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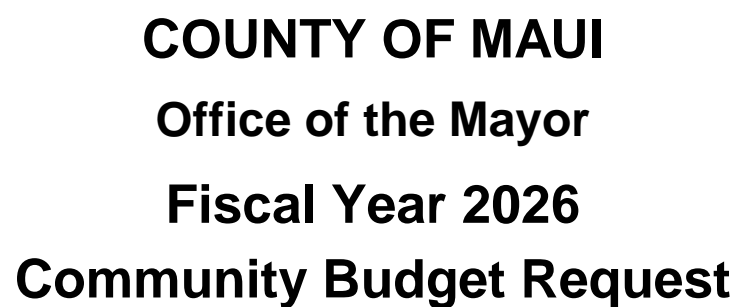
Russell Adkins
Susan Moulton
Roy Yamaguchi
Leslie-Ann Yokouchi

PROGRAMS

Camp Imua
Camp Discovery
Dream Imua
Imua Autism Services
Imua Discovery Garden
Imua Inclusion Preschool
Infant & Early
Childhood Services
Nā Keiki O Emalia
Newborn Hearing Screening
Play Imua



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discoverimua.com



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Name: _____

Email Address: _____ **Phone:** _____

Mailing Address: _____ **City/Zip:** _____

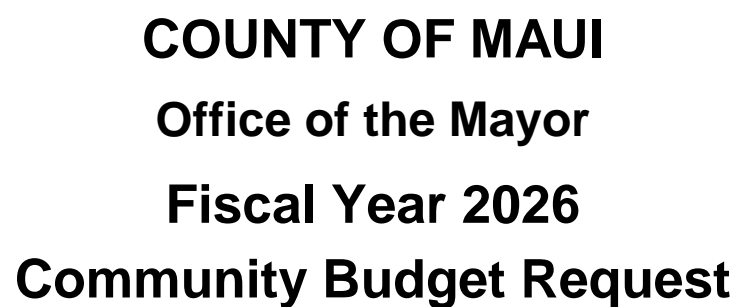
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Request/Issue:

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Funding Request (if known): \$

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Name: _____

Email Address: _____ **Phone:** _____

Mailing Address: _____ **City/Zip:** _____

I Represent: ☐ Myself
☐ Organization

Request/Issue:

[illegible]

Funding Request (if known): \$

Responsible County Department:

April 21, 2025, 9 a.m.
Council Chamber, Kalana O Maui Building

To: Maui County Council Committee on Budget, Finance and Economic Development

Yuki Lei Sugimura, Chair

Tasha Kama, Vice Chair

From: Grassroot Institute of Hawaii

Ted Kefalas, Director of Strategic Campaigns

RE: Bill 41 (2025) — A BILL FOR AN ORDINANCE RELATING TO THE OPERATING BUDGET FOR THE COUNTY OF MAUI FOR THE FISCAL YEAR JULY 1, 2025, TO JUNE 30, 2026

Aloha Chair Sugimura, Vice Chair Kama and other members of the Committee,

The Grassroot Institute of Hawaii offers **comments** on [Bill 41 \(2025\)](#), the fiscal year 2026 operating budget.

We appreciate that the Council has decided to review the budget with the aim of fiscal responsibility. To assist the Council in its deliberations, we offer the following observations and recommendations.

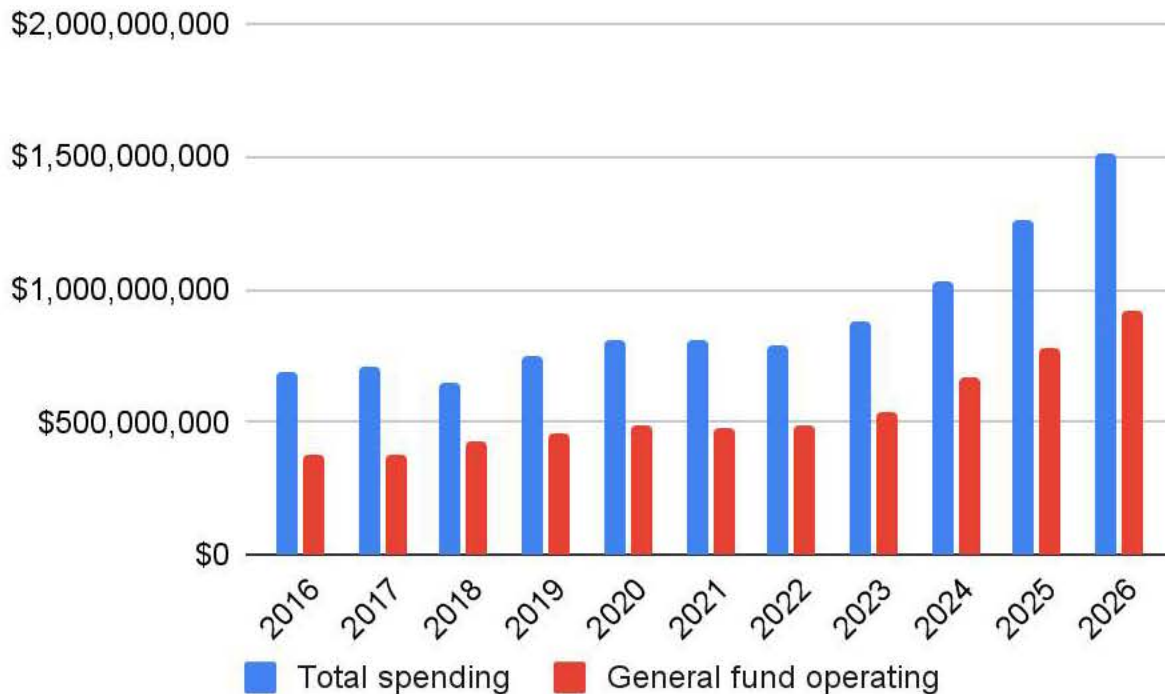
>> County spending has almost tripled since fiscal 2016.

Maui County's budget has increased in nominal dollars by 287% since fiscal 2016, when actual expenditures totaled \$527 million. This year, Mayor Richard Bissen's budget proposes spending \$1.51 billion in operating and capital expenses.

Indexed for inflation, total county spending and general fund operating spending have both more than doubled since fiscal 2016, as Figure 1 on the following page shows.

This increase is concerning since it means that county taxpayers are either paying much more in taxes or that the county has taken on significantly more debt. As we discuss later, both are true.

Figure 1: Maui County expenditures, fiscal 2016–2026



>> General fund carryover savings represent 13% of the fiscal 2026 general fund operating budget

Carryover savings refers to the “unappropriated revenue and unencumbered balances of any appropriation in a fund at the end of the fiscal year. For budget purposes, this amount is included in the revenue estimates for the ensuing fiscal budget year.”¹

If funds are appropriated but not spent, they remain in county coffers for the next fiscal year. But large amounts of carryover could mean that the county is unable to use the funding and is overcharging taxpayers.

As Figures 2 and 3 show, this problem was especially salient for fiscal year 2023, when carryover from fiscal 2022 represented almost one-third of the general fund operating budget.

But in fiscal 2026, carryover savings will still total \$122.9 million.

¹ [“Fiscal Year 2026 Mayor’s Proposed Budget,”](#) Maui County, p. 1061

Figure 2: General fund carryover savings, indexed for inflation, fiscal 2016–2026

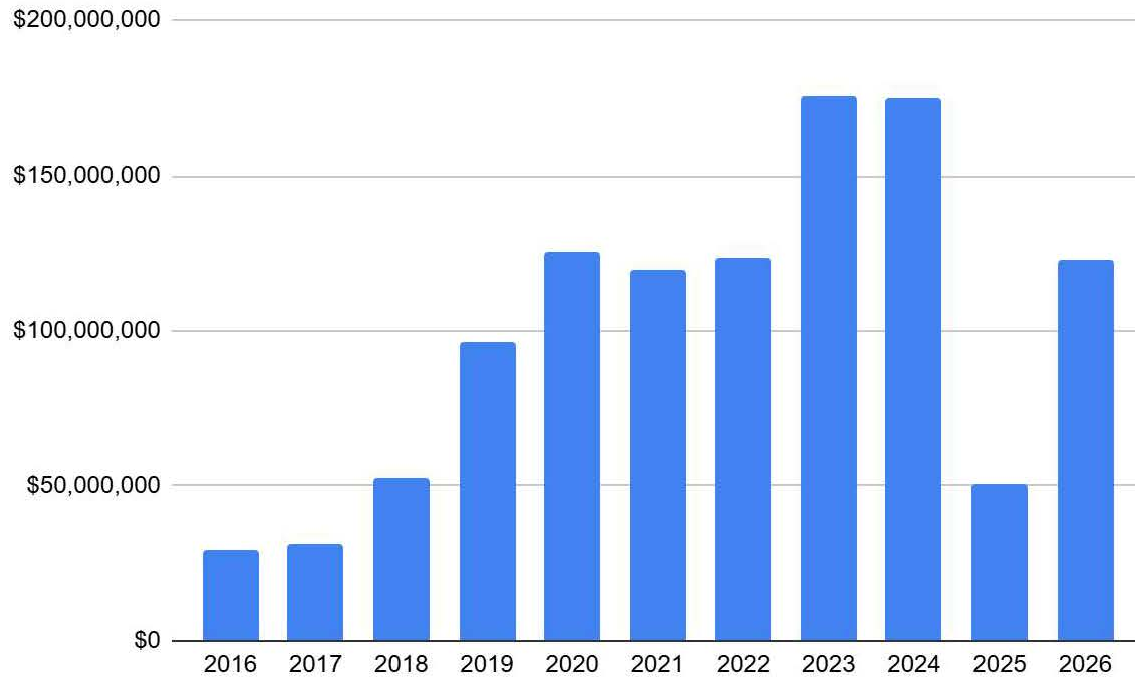
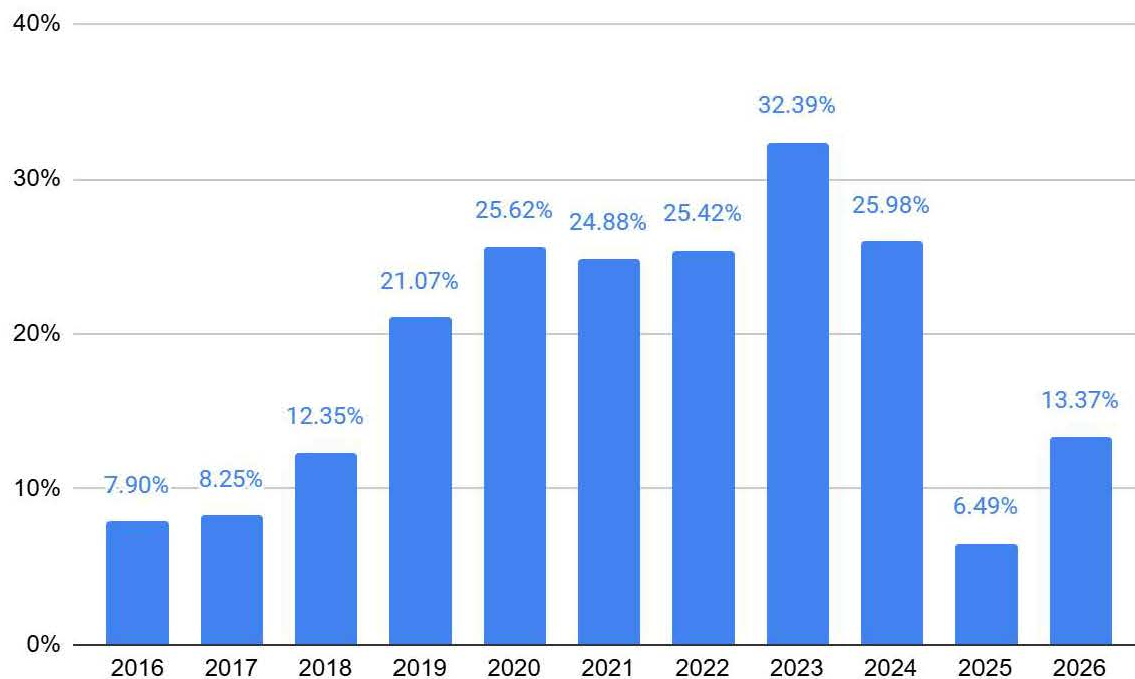


Figure 3: General fund carryover savings as a percentage of general fund expenditures, fiscal 2016–2026

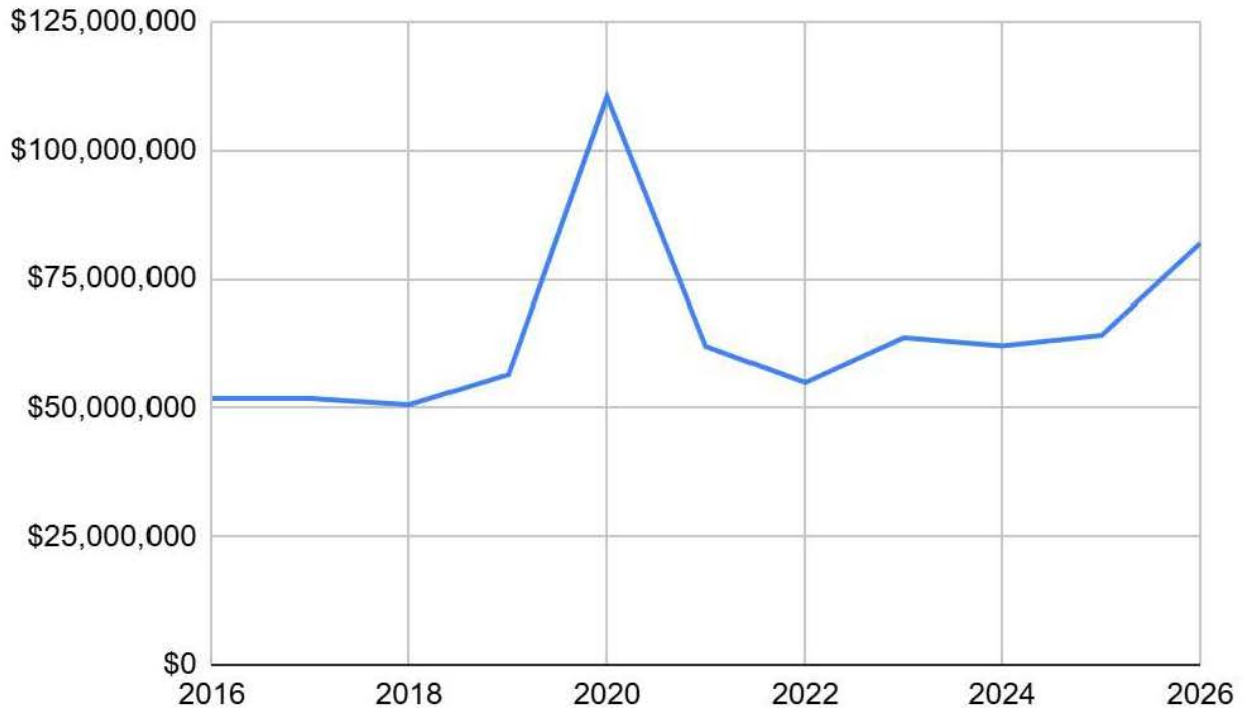


>> County debt has increased by more than \$100 million since fiscal 2016

Increasingly, the county has taken on debt to fund its capital and operating expenses. Data from the county’s Annual Comprehensive Financial Reports indicate that, adjusted for inflation, the county debt burden has increased from \$425 million in fiscal 2016 to \$551 million in fiscal 2024 — the latest ACFR year available.

County debt service payments have also increased since fiscal 2016, by 158%, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Debt service payments, fiscal 2016–2026



>> Property assessments and tax bills are increasing

In nominal terms, Maui County property owners paid more than twice as much in property taxes in fiscal 2025 as they did in fiscal 2016 — \$254 million then compared to \$585 million last year. Adjusted for inflation, total property taxes paid during the same period increased by more than 77%.

For the upcoming year, the mayor's budget proposes lowering the tax rates for owner-occupied properties, but overall property tax revenue would still increase to \$650 million — a \$116 million increase over last year.

These higher tax bills are primarily driven by higher assessed values — to some extent a reflection of Hawaii's housing shortage. But agriculture, commercial and industrial property valuations have increased as well.

The net taxable value of all Maui County properties in fiscal 2016 was \$36.2 billion; for fiscal 2026, it is \$84.1 billion.

Table 1 shows the increase in real property assessments by tax class from before the wildfires, comparing fiscal years 2024 and 2026.

Table 1: Property tax assessments, fiscal 2024 and 2026

Tax class	FY24 assessment	FY26 assessment	Percent change
Owner-occupied	\$16,800,843,840	\$23,447,709,200	39.56%
Non owner-occupied	\$17,674,366,645	\$19,817,879,300	12.13%
Apartment	\$516,862,650	\$710,634,010	37.49%
Hotel and Resort	\$4,345,298,900	\$4,711,532,700	8.43%
Time Share	\$3,745,183,000	\$4,215,614,000	12.56%
TVR-STVR	\$17,931,358,860	\$20,100,632,300	12.10%
Long-term rental	\$1,901,523,235	\$3,343,699,100	75.84%
Agricultural	\$1,643,754,345	\$2,050,400,195	24.74%
Conservation	\$322,875,180	\$323,050,705	0.05%
Commercial	\$2,890,933,600	\$2,714,839,230	-6.09%
Industrial	\$2,282,246,565	\$2,398,881,795	5.11%
Commercialized residential	\$286,817,400	\$314,978,000	9.82%
Total	\$70,342,064,220	\$84,149,850,535	19.63%

Recommendations

>> Move money into the county's emergency fund and prepay liabilities

The mayor's proposed budget would place \$25 million into the emergency fund, up from \$20 million in fiscal 2025. Grassroot supports moving an extra \$25 million into this account.

Socking away this money for a future disaster would be prudent, and \$25 million would represent less than a quarter of the county's \$122.9 million in carryover savings from fiscal 2025.

There are many reasons for this. First, it is clear that the county is unable to expend all of the funds it appropriates each year. Second, there are many question marks at the federal level, and it would be wise for Maui to keep additional funding in reserve this year to hedge against economic downturns or federal cuts.

Grassroot also suggests that the county look for ways to prepay debts or other liabilities so that taxpayers will not be overly burdened by the higher levels of debt that the county has taken out in recent years.

>> Reduce property tax rates

Grassroot applauds Mayor Richard Bissen's proposed rate cuts for the owner-occupied property tax class. But even if the mayor's new rates and tiers for the class are adopted, the savings would amount to only about \$3 million, and taxes on the owner-occupied tax class would still surge by 28% over fiscal 2024 — since before the wildfires.

Grassroot suggests reducing property tax rates more broadly to lower general fund tax collections by \$17 million, which represents less than one-sixth of the estimated general fund carryover savings.

Homeowners should get a bigger break, but commercial and industrial properties should also realize some relief. After Hurricane Iniki struck Kauai in 1992, county lawmakers there slashed rates for those two classes by 50% for the 1995 fiscal year.² Table 2 shows Grassroot's suggested amendments to the proposed tax rates.

Table 2: Proposed amendments to real property tax rates for fiscal 2026

Tax class	Proposed FY26 rates	Grassroot proposed rates	Net revenue change
Owner-occupied (OO)			
OO tier 1 (<= \$1.3M)	1.7	1.25	-\$9,008,496
OO tier 2 (\$1.3M to \$3M)	1.9	1.75	-\$361,941

² Jonathan Helton and Malia Hill, "[Kauai disaster recovery holds lessons for Lahaina](#)," The Maui News, March 6, 2024.

OO tier 3 (> \$3M)	3.1	2.75	-\$355,561
Non owner-occupied (NOO)			
NOO tier 1 (<= \$1M)	5.87	5.87	\$0
NOO tier 2 (\$1M to \$3M)	8.5	8.5	\$0
NOO tier 3 (> \$3M)	14	14	\$0
Apartment	3.5	3	-\$355,317
Hotel and resort	11.75	11.75	\$0
Time share	14.6	14.6	\$0
TVR-STVR			
TVR tier 1 (<= \$1M)	12.5	12.5	\$0
TVR tier 2 (\$1M to \$3M)	13.5	13.5	\$0
TVR tier 3 (> \$3M)	15	15	\$0
Long-term rental (LTR)			
LTR tier 1 (<= \$1.3M)	3	2.5	-\$1,459,858
LTR tier 2 (\$1.3M to \$3M)	5	4.5	-\$153,930
LTR tier 3 (> \$3M)	8	7.5	-\$58,061
Agricultural	5.74	5.25	-\$1,004,696
Conservation	6.43	6	-\$138,912
Commercial	6.05	5.25	-\$2,171,871
Industrial	7.05	6.25	-\$1,919,105
Commercialized residential (CR)			
CR tier 1 (<= \$1M)	4	3.75	-\$35,709
CR tier 2 (\$1M to \$3M)	5	4.75	-\$31,681
CR tier 3 (> \$3M)	8	7.75	-\$11,355
Total			-\$17,066,494

Conclusion

Overall, Grassroot appreciates that the Council has chosen to give Maui's proposed record-breaking budget a close review, and we would welcome further discussion on the county's finances.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Ted Kefalas
 Director of Strategic Campaigns
 Grassroot Institute of Hawaii