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WRITTEN TESTIMONY

I am David DeLeon, testifying on behalf of the Realtors Association of Maui in support of the concept proposed in PC-37(2). Given the magnitude of the housing crisis besetting our community, I cannot think of a more important step for the Council to take than to find ways for the County to facilitate the development of housing our local residents can afford.

It is clear that our current methodology is not working. As noted at the June 30 Planning Committee meeting, both Governor Ige and Mayor Arakawa have publicly stated that government itself is an impediment to housing development. Government does not have large blocks of land it can offer for development nor a continuous supply of money to build homes. But it does control the regulatory process that can either promote housing development or stall it. And for decades the land use regulatory process in Hawaii has been stuck in the stall position, psychologically, legally and structurally. Housing development was strictly the private sector's responsibility. For housing development to start happening again, that narrative has to change. That's why the RAM was excited by County Planning Director Spence's June 16, 2016 letter offering suggestions for how Maui County can facilitate an increase housing supply. That letter showed a realization that the only way out of our housing crisis is to increase housing supply dramatically and that the only way that is going to happen is if the County stops impeding housing development and instead starts becomes a housing facilitator.

There have been other positive signs as well. The recently announced Department of Water Supply's water fixture policy change is a great example of a creative step that the county can take to promote housing development.

RAM was also excited to see the Planning Committee's response to the Director's letter. Too often good ideas get lost in committee. The formation of a Temporary Investigative Group to study the Director's proposed 11 points, with the goal of choosing a prioritized selection for active legislative review and Council approval is very encouraging. RAM would like to lend its active support to that process in any way possible.

In that regard, our Government Affairs Committee reviewed the Director's proposal and offers its own prioritization of the 11 items. The Committee recommends that the Council's TIG give particular consideration to items 1,2,3,5, 7 and 10.

We would also like to reiterate our support of the concept of the County Administration being able to contract for the services of a Housing Specialist or Czar. We see this as a professional position that would provide the County the type of focus on housing development that it is now lacking. We would also like to re-iterate RAM's support for the County maximizing its use of the services provided by the Na Hale O Maui Community Land Trust as a vehicle for developing housing that will remain affordable. We would also think it is time for Council Member Carroll's Ohana proposal to get an up or down vote. RAM supports the measure, with the only limitation that units created under that policy should not be made available as vacation rentals.

Mahalo.

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