

Good Morning Chair and council members,

My name is Kelly O’Kief, and I’m here today to strongly oppose Hawaii Bill 54. I work for P.B. Sullivan, a very reputable merit-based contractor that has successfully completed numerous public projects on Maui. This bill, which would mandate (community workforce agreements) for public works contracts, unfairly disadvantages contractors like ours, reduces competition, and increases costs for taxpayers.

These agreements would require contractors to hire from union halls, follow union rules and contribute to union benefits – even if they already provide equal or better wages and benefits to their employees. For merit-based contractors, this means either being forced to change the way we do business or being excluded from the opportunity of building public projects altogether. This is not fair competition; it’s government favoritism toward unions.

Furthermore, reducing the number of bidders on public projects will certainly drive up costs. Studies have shown that these types of union mandates can increase construction costs by 15% -- a burden that will ultimately fall on Maui’s taxpayers. At a time when we should be maximizing the value of public funds, Bill 54 would do the opposite.

Maui County’s public projects should be awarded based on merit, efficiency and value, not whether a contractor is a union or non-union. Please oppose Bill 54 and keep public bidding fair and competitive for all qualified contractors.

Thank you.