

Budget, Finance, and Economic Development Committee (2025-2027) on 2026-04-17 6:00 PM

Meeting Time: 04-17-26 18:00

eComments Report

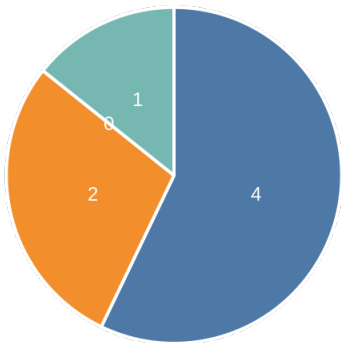
Meetings	Meeting Time	Agenda Items	Comments	Support	Oppose	Neutral
Budget, Finance, and Economic Development Committee (2025-2027) on 2026-04-17 6:00 PM	04-17-26 18:00	2	7	4	2	0

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

Support (57%) Oppose (28%) Neutral (0%)
No Response (14%)



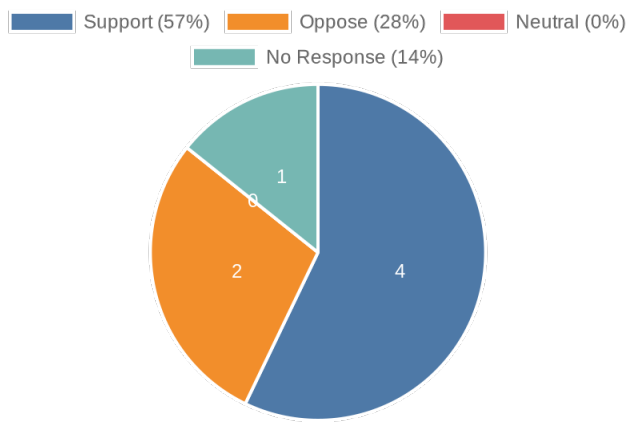
Budget, Finance, and Economic Development Committee (2025-2027) on 2026-04-17 6:00 PM
04-17-26 18:00

Agenda Name	Comments	Support	Oppose	Neutral
A G E N D A	4	3	1	0
BFED-1 PROPOSED FISCAL YEAR 2027 BUDGET FOR THE COUNTY OF MAUI (BFED-1)	3	1	1	0

Sentiments for All Agenda Items

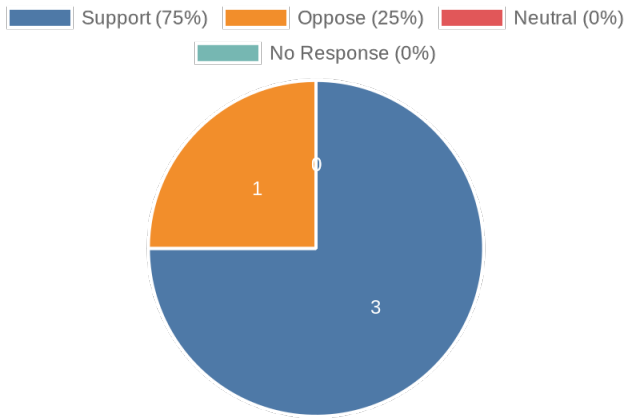
The following graphs display sentiments for comments that have location data. Only locations of users who have commented will be shown.

Overall Sentiment



Agenda Item: eComments for A G E N D A

Overall Sentiment



Paul Keahi

Location:

Submitted At: 3:41pm 04-17-26

Aloha Chair, Vice-Chair, and Honorable Members of the Budget and Finance Committee,

Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to testify today, and for your continued service to the people of Maui during one of the most consequential periods in our island's history.

We come before you first in deep gratitude. Mahalo for your leadership in the wake of the August 2023 fires, for your commitment to keeping Lahaina families rooted, and for your recognition that recovery must be more than rebuilding structures. It must be about restoring community. The Lahaina Community Land Trust stands as a partner in that shared mission.

Our work is simple in concept, but profound in impact: to ensure that the lands of Lahaina remain in Lahaina hands-protected, stewarded, and passed forward to future generations- at a time when outside investment pressures have long threatened to displace local families. And because the fires accelerated that vulnerability overnight, the role of community-based land stewardship is no longer optional. It is essential.

We recognize and appreciate the County's support of innovative housing solutions and community-driven models. The Community Land Trust model is one such solution- one that creates permanent affordability, prevents speculative resale, and anchors families to place- not just for today, but for generations.

This is not just housing policy. This is legacy.

The decisions made by this Council in this moment will define how Maui is remembered. Whether we allowed Lahaina to become another cautionary tale of displacement, or whether we stood together to protect it as a living, thriving community rooted in its people and its history. Continued support for the Lahaina Community Land Trust is an opportunity for the County to affirm that legacy. It is an opportunity to invest in a model that keeps land in community control, that multiplies the impact of public dollars over time, and that aligns directly with the values we

all share: stability, equity, and m_lama __ina.

We do not come asking the County to act alone. We come as partners, ready to leverage resources, relationships, and community trust to ensure that every dollar invested yields lasting benefit.

But partnership requires commitment.

We respectfully urge the County of Maui to continue, and where possible, deepen its support for the Lahaina Community Land Trust. These investments will not only address today's housing crisis, but will help ensure that Lahaina rebuilds stronger than ever.

In closing, mahalo again for your leadership, your listening, and your willingness to walk this path with the community. The work ahead is not easy, but it is clear. Let us be the generation that chose to protect Lahaina, not just rebuild it.

Mahalo nui loa for your time and consideration.

Me ke aloha,
Kapali Keahi - LCLT Board Member

Guest User

Location:

Submitted At: 12:03am 04-17-26

Clare Apana, Testimony on behalf of Malama Kakanilua:

Maui County Council Budget, Finance and Economic Development Committee April 16, 2026

Testimony of M_lama Kakanilua on BFED-1

Request to include 2 line items currently in FY 2026 County Open Space Fund to Fund a Management Plan for the 495-acre Wai'ale Burial Preserve in FY 2027 Budget

Aloha BFED Chair Sugimura, Vice Chair Batangan and Committee Members:

Malama Kakanilua ("MK") is a Kanaka Maoli non-profit organization who has been a voice for the large burial areas found in the natural Pu'uone (sand dune) of Central Maui for over 20 years. One of these is the 495-acre, historically significant area known as the "Wai'ale Cultural Preserve."

Wai'ale Cultural Preserve: Background

One of the largest remaining areas of undisturbed burial dunes on Maui (the former proposed 495-acre A&B "Wai'ale" housing project site) was purchased for \$10 mil with county funds as part of an amendment to the CIP fund of the FY 2021 budget. The Mayor issued this statement with the purchase amendment:

"The Administration is working with the County's archaeologist, community members, and Native Hawaiian organizations relating to the proposed land acquisition. The Mayor continues his efforts to listen to the Native Hawaiian community involved with the protection of Na Iwi Kupuna and the development of a historic and cultural resource management plan for the Waiale parcels."

After the purchase, the area was fenced and a few signs were erected. Malama Kakanilua was issued a County Right of Entry to the lands in 2024 to conduct re-interment ceremonies on the preserve, but no further progress was made on a management plan for the preserve until 2025 when funding was included in the FY 2026 Budget. Current 2026 budget funding for MK to manage the Wai'ale lands

Our current County Budget has a \$500,000 County Open Space Fund proviso item for MK to care for the Wai'ale lands. It reads:

- "Up to \$500,000 must be for Malama Kakanilua for safety and security for the burial and cultural preserve at the County-owned lands at Wai'ale."

Our current County Budget has a \$200,000 proviso item for MK to create a management plan for the Wai'ale lands. It reads:

"Up to \$200,000 must be for Malama Kakanilua to develop a long-term management plan for the 500-acre parcel known as Waiale Cultural Preserve."

Malama Kakanilua prepared and timely submitted two grant proposals for the the two proviso line items in October 2025. MK also reached out to interested community members for input on a future management plan for the area.

In spite of taking these actions, the grants were not executed by the administration and funds were not released for Malama Kakanilua's use to complete the Waiale Cultural Preserve proviso items in the FY 2026 budget. MK made a number of attempts to communicate with the administration's grants program officials during 2025 and 2026, to determine the status of the grant applications, but communications were rarely returned and the matter was never resolved.

Late last month MK was made aware that the FY2026 proviso items for the Waiale cultural Preserve WERE NOT EXTENDED into the Mayor's FY 2027 proposed budget. Instead, a representative of the County Budget Office said they would be "coming with a budget amendment to change (the existing proviso items) to a contract and open RFP."

We can't understand why the County would not want a group like MK with deep knowledge and involvement with the Wai'ale lands to be issued approved grant contracts and a Right of Entry and be allowed to proceed to care for the land. It seems very non-productive to start all over again with and RFP process. The land needs care now.

We are asking that the two current proviso items be re-instated into the FY 2027 budget.

The \$200,000 proviso funds were intended to be used by our non-profit to contract for a management plan process, conduct public outreach and complete a management plan. The \$500,000 proviso funds were intended to secure fences; reduce fire loads; secure an irrigation water source; clean up current dumping and prevent future illegal dumping and other health and safety actions- while the management plan process was underway. We understand that the the county Grants administration programs have had staff turn- over and other challenges, but in cannot understand why our grant application were not processed and we were not informed of what could be done to complete the process and release funding.

We humbly appreciate any efforts the Council can make to re-instate the funding and make it possible for MK to move forward to care for the Wai'ale Cultural and Burial Preserve. We have also attached a brief timeline of our activities regarding the Wai'ale lands, for informational purposes

Clare Apana, President

Malama Kakanilua
260 Halenani Drive
Wailuku, HI 96793'

Wai'ale Cultural and Burial Preserve

Malama Kakanilua Wai'ale Preserve Timeline

1990s - Archeologists recommend no sand mining in Wai'ale/ Maui Lani area due to the certainty of burial disturbance of iwi kupuna (ancestral burials)

-Shortly after, sand mining activities commenced

2002 - Wailuku-Kahului Community Plan "Implementing Actions" requires that development projects "... include recommendations to mitigate potential adverse impacts on cultural resources including site avoidance, adequate buffer areas, and interpretation. Particular attention should be directed toward dune areas, known and probable precontact habitation areas, and other sites and areas listed in No. 5."

Implementing Action No.5 states: "Significant Wailuku-Kahului region sites and areas include the following: Wahi Pana (Significant Traditional Places)"- "Pu'u One Sand Dune Formation from Kahului Harbor to Waikapu"

2006/2007 - Malama Kakanilua members testify numerous times during the Maui Island Plan update, about the dense area of traditional burials in the wail sand dunes. Citizen Review Committee recommended that the Wai'ale Sand Dunes be preserved as green space.

2008 - Alexander & Baldwin applies for project district zoning for 495-acres of Wai'ale lands. Malama Kakanilua files a complaint for the inadequacy of the burial treatment plan in their application and the result was they replaced it with a report that was over 100 pages long and reported many more burials that had been discovered.

2008 - 2010 - Malama Kakanilua advocates for iwi kupuna burials at the Maui Lani Shopping Center. MK assisted SHPD with reinterment at this site in 2010.

2017 - Malama Kakanilua lodges protest against the sand mining activities at Maui Lani phase 9. In that same year, MK filed to report that Maui Lani had violated their grading permits. Maui County Courts ruled in MK favor and granted an injunction halt sand mining.

2017 - 2018 - Malama Kakanilua testified around every 2 weeks to get the Maui County sand mining moratorium passed.

2021- 2022- Maui County approves \$10 million to purchase 495-acre Wai'ale lands as a Cultural Preserve. Malama Kakanilua rally support for the purchase. Purchase is completed and Wai'ale Cultural preserve is created.

June 2025- Maui County's FY 2026 budget has line proviso items providing funding for MK to create a Management Plan for Wai'ale lands; and separate funding to undertake needed health and safety maintenance activities on the land

October 2025- MK submits grant proposal applications for both Wai'ale line items.

November- December 2025- Little or no follow up communications are received from County Grant coordinators, and grants are not processed.

Late 2025- MK obtained a meeting with Mayor's Chief of Staff to discuss next steps to finalize the Wai'ale grants. It was agreed that an additional meeting was needed. MK volunteers made a number of phone calls, and sent emails requesting the promised follow-up meeting- but one was not scheduled.

Jan-March 2026- MK volunteers reached out to administration to try to determine status of Wai'ale grants in upcoming budget. No calls were returned. If productive meetings could have been held- the FY 2026 grant activities would be underway by now.

In summary: Timeline for the Wai'ale lands shows that citizens concerned about traditional iwi kupuna burial protection, like Malama Kakanilua ("MK") have advocated for the lands of Wai'ale preserve to be protected for 20 years or more. MK includes those who have read all the burial treatment plans, followed all the archaeology, walked the sand dunes on many occasions, visited the burial sites and brought much new information into the process. Their efforts resulted in Wai'ale's 495-acres being purchased by the county in 2022, with the intent to protect the land as a Cultural and Burial Preserve. MK sincerely would like to move forward and be able to help guide the care and restoration of the Wai'ale Cultural Preserve lands.

Edward Codelia

Location:

Submitted At: 5:53pm 04-16-26

Testimony Regarding County Funding for Adaptations Dance Theater – Bill 55

I respect the work of local artists and the cultural value of the performing arts. However, the question before the Council is not whether dance has value. The question is whether taxpayer funding should be used to subsidize a private performing arts organization at a time when Maui County faces serious and measurable challenges affecting residents.

Maui residents are dealing with a housing system where the median home price is roughly \$1.2 million while median household income is around \$100,000, ongoing infrastructure bottlenecks involving water and permitting, and agricultural producers leaving the industry because basic processing infrastructure does not exist. Farmers have recently testified that they cannot even process the animals they raise due to a lack of slaughter capacity on island. These are structural problems affecting the cost of living, food security, and economic stability for the entire community.

In that context, the County of Maui should be directing limited public funds toward essential infrastructure and services that benefit the entire population, not toward subsidizing individual nonprofit organizations—even those doing meaningful artistic work. Arts organizations, like many nonprofits across the country, are typically supported through ticket sales, private donations, foundations, and philanthropic grants, rather than public tax dollars.

The testimony in support of funding emphasizes the benefits to artists and participants in the program. While those benefits may be real, they primarily affect a small number of individuals directly involved in the organization, rather than producing measurable public outcomes comparable to housing, agriculture, infrastructure, or emergency services.

For these reasons, I believe public funding should prioritize core community needs and essential government responsibilities. Arts organizations can and should continue to exist and contribute to Maui's cultural life, but they should do so through private support and community patronage rather than taxpayer subsidy.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.
Lore Menin, Kihei Resident

Guest User

Location:

Submitted At: 3:36pm 04-16-26

My name is Hallie Hunt, and I'm the Artistic Director of Adaptations Dance Theater, Maui's only professional contemporary dance company. I am writing today on behalf of bill 55 and in strong support of continued County funding for Adaptations Dance Theater.

This year, ADT celebrates its 13th anniversary as a nonprofit arts organization. For over a decade, we've been committed to making Maui a place where professional dance can not only exist—but truly thrive. Through residencies, performances, education programs, and community engagement, we have built a homegrown ecosystem that supports dancers from pre-professional to professional, right here on our island.

The county's support over the past two years has had a transformative impact.

Because of this support, we have been able to double our programming, doubling both the opportunities for artists and access for our community. This funding has directly increased the amount of time artists are able to live and work on Maui, sustaining their careers without needing to leave home. It has meant more contracts, more creative time, and more stability for local artists.

At a time when small dance companies across the United States are closing their doors, we are incredibly proud—and deeply grateful—that Maui County has chosen to invest in keeping its only resident contemporary dance company alive and growing. That support is not something we take lightly. It is the reason this work is possible.

The impact of this funding extends far beyond our organization. It has meaningfully changed the lives of the artists we employ—offering them viable, professional pathways in the arts. It also sends a powerful message to our youth: that their county, their representatives, and their community believe that becoming an artist is not only

valid, but valuable and supported.

The performing arts are essential to any healthy, vibrant community. They foster connection and a sense of belonging.

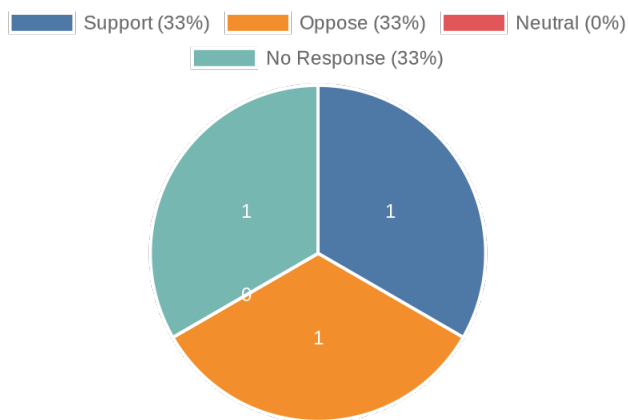
On behalf of our Board, our artists, and our community, I want to say mahalo nui loa for your continued support. Without it, this work would not be possible.

We respectfully ask for your continued investment in Adaptations Dance Theater, so we can keep building momentum, expanding opportunity, and ensuring that Maui remains a place where artists can live, work, and thrive.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Agenda Item: eComments for BFED-1 PROPOSED FISCAL YEAR 2027 BUDGET FOR THE COUNTY OF MAUI (BFED-1)

Overall Sentiment



BFED Committee

Location:

Submitted At: 7:52am 04-20-26

Testimonies received from BFED Committee

Guest User

Location:

Submitted At: 3:38pm 04-16-26

On behalf of bill 55:

Aloha Chair and Members of the Council,

My name is Rick Dobson. I've worked in animal health care on Maui for the past fourteen years, and I'm raising three children here. I'm writing in support continued funding for Adaptations Dance Theater.

Living on Maui comes with real limitations when it comes to access to professional arts and culture. For many families, including mine, traveling off island to experience live performance just isn't financially realistic. That's why having a company like ADT here matters—it brings high-quality, professional contemporary dance directly to our community.

I attended my first ADT performance in 2023, and it was also my first time seeing contemporary dance. It changed how I understood what dance could be. More importantly, it made me realize how important it is that this kind of work exists here on Maui. Since then, I've consistently brought my teenagers—and often their friends—to

performances. It's become a meaningful part of their cultural education, and something we can access right here at home.

In a rural and geographically isolated place like Maui, organizations like ADT make a real difference. They contribute to quality of life and help make it possible for families, artists, and young people to stay here. It shows that we don't have to leave the island to experience or be part of high-level art.

What stands out to me is that ADT is clearly supported by the community it serves. The audiences are local. The impact is local. I'm not part of the arts world—I'm a working parent—but I continue to support ADT because it has had a direct and lasting impact on my family.

I respectfully ask that you support Bill 55 and continue funding for Adaptations Dance Theater. It is an important part of building a strong, connected, and sustainable community here on Maui.

Mahalo,

Rick Dobson

Edward Codelia

Location:

Submitted At: 7:15pm 04-14-26

Enough is enough.

Maui residents are watching their government struggle to perform its most basic responsibilities while millions of dollars continue to flow out through grants, subsidies, and handouts to nonprofits, organizations, and special interests. Meanwhile the people who actually fund this government—the residents and taxpayers of Maui County—are left dealing with rising costs, failing infrastructure, crime, slow permitting, and departments that can barely keep up with their core duties.

Ask a simple question: when was the last time you saw an ordinary resident stand in front of the council asking for taxpayer money to pay their bills, tax-free? It doesn't happen. Working families on Maui handle their responsibilities every day without subsidies or special treatment. Yet government seems far more comfortable writing checks to organizations than fixing the systems it directly controls.

The county's responsibility is not to function as a grant-distribution agency. Its responsibility is to run the government—public safety, roads, drainage, permitting, planning, infrastructure, and the departments residents rely on every single day. Those systems should be functioning at a high level before taxpayer money is dispersed elsewhere.

At the same time, residents are being asked to trust leadership despite a record that raises serious concerns. We have seen leadership failures, rising public safety questions, and a government structure that often appears more focused on messaging and programs than on competence and results. Accountability matters, and public officials should always be prepared to answer for the outcomes under their watch.

If Maui residents want things to change, the first step is showing up, paying attention, and demanding accountability. Government should serve the people of this island first—not political priorities, not press releases, and not a network of organizations funded by public money.

Support the departments you are responsible for. Fix the systems that are failing residents. Focus on competence and results.

And if leaders cannot do that, they should step aside and allow people who will.

BFED Committee

From: Kapali Keahi <kapali@lahainacommunitylandtrust.org>
Sent: Friday, April 17, 2026 3:13 PM
To: BFED Committee
Subject: BFED -1

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

Aloha Chair, Vice-Chair, and Honorable Members of the Budget and Finance Committee,

Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to testify today, and for your continued service to the people of Maui during one of the most consequential periods in the Hawaiian Kingdom's history.

We come before you first in deep gratitude. Mahalo for your leadership in the wake of the August 2023 fires, for your commitment to keeping Lahaina families rooted, and for your recognition that recovery must be more than rebuilding structures. It must be about restoring community. The Lahaina Community Land Trust stands as a partner in that shared mission.

Our work is simple in concept, but profound in impact: to ensure that the lands of Lahaina remain in Lahaina hands-protected, stewarded, and passed forward to future generations- at a time when outside investment pressures have long threatened to displace local families. And because the fires accelerated that vulnerability overnight, the role of community-based land stewardship is no longer optional. It is essential.

We recognize and appreciate the County's support of innovative housing solutions and community-driven models. The Community Land Trust model is one such solution- one that creates permanent affordability, prevents speculative resale, and anchors families to place- not just for today, but for generations.

This is not just housing policy. This is legacy.

The decisions made by this Council in this moment will define how Maui is remembered. Whether we allowed Lahaina to become another cautionary tale of displacement, or whether we stood together to protect it as a living, thriving community rooted in its people and its history. Continued support for the Lahaina Community Land Trust is an opportunity for the County to affirm that legacy. It is an opportunity to invest in a model that keeps land in community control, that multiplies the impact of public dollars over time, and that aligns directly with the values we all share: stability, equity, and mālama 'āina.

We do not come asking the County to act alone. We come as partners, ready to leverage resources, relationships, and community trust to ensure that every dollar invested yields lasting benefit.

But partnership requires commitment.

We respectfully urge the County of Maui to continue, and where possible, deepen its support for the Lahaina Community Land Trust. These investments will not only address today's housing crisis, but will

help ensure that Lahaina remains Lahaina for generations to come.

In closing, mahalo again for your leadership, your listening, and your willingness to walk this path with the community. The work ahead is not easy, but it is clear. Let us be the generation that chose to protect Lahaina- its people- its story.

Mahalo nui loa for your time and consideration.

Me ke aloha,
Kapali Keahi - LCLT Board Member

FY27 West Maui Budget Items Included in the Mayor's Proposal

- Affordable Housing Fund:
 - Reclassification of a prior purchase of 14.99 acres from Open Space Fund in the amount **\$1,434,557** for the Kaiaulu O Napili Affordable Housing project. *(II.Special Purpose Revenues, Page 47)*
 - **Up to \$2,461,000** must be for a grant to Lahaina Community Land Trust for the From Ashes, 'Aina: LCLT Fire Recovery Vertical Construction Project. *(II.Special Purpose Revenues, Page 47)*
 - **Up to \$10,000,000** must be for a loan to A0746 Lahaina, L.P., for Kaiaulu O Napili 153 Project located in Napili, Maui, Hawai'i. The project will serve households at 30-120 percent of (AMI), thirty-three (33) homes (three and four bedroom) with rent-to-own options after fifteen years, seventy two (72) multifamily apartments (two to four bedroom), and forty eight senior apartments (one and two bedroom). TMK: (2)4-3-001:096 (portion). The loan will bear interest at a rate of 0.25 percent per year after repayment obligations to the rental housing revolving funds have been satisfied. *(II.Special Purpose Revenues, Page 50)*
- Hawaiian Cultural Restoration Revolving Fund (to become the Lahaina Royal Complex Restoration Revolving Fund) : Total- \$1,173,825
 - Must provide funds for the preservation and restoration of Lahaina Royal Complex sites and artifacts relating to Moku'ula and Mokuhinia, and Kamehameha III School and library areas makai of Front Street. *(II.Special Purpose Revenues, Page 52)*
- Open Space, Natural Resources, Cultural Resources, and Scenic Views Preservation Fund:
 - **Up to \$300,000** must be for debt service for the purchase of approximately 148 acres at Launiupoko, Maui, Hawai'i, TMK: (2) 4-7-001-030. *(II.Special Purpose Revenues, Page 56)*
 - **Up to \$741,125** must be for the Trust for Public Land for the acquisition of parcels totaling approximately 17.8 acres located at Kā'anapali, Honolua, Maui, Hawai'i, TMKs: (2) 4-1-001:006, 019, and 4-2-001:004 and 4-2-004:032. *(II.Special Purpose Revenues, Page 56)*
- Department of Environmental Management-Environmental Protection and Sustainability Program:
 - **Up to \$300,000** must be for West Maui Green Cycle LLC.
 - Go Green West Maui Recycling: \$240,000

RECEIVED AT BFED MEETING ON 4-17-26

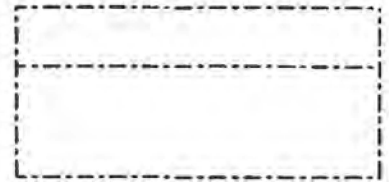
(West Maui)

*Submitted by Councilmember
Palatin*

- Department of Management-Office of Recovery:
 - **Up to \$9,790,000** must be for The Lahaina Restoration Foundation to rebuild the Old Lahaina Courthouse, the Old Lahaina Prison.
 - **Up to \$250,000** must be for Lahaina Town Action Committee for incubation of displaced businesses.
 - Grant to J. Walter Cameron Center West Maui: **\$180,000**
- Office of the Mayor- Grants Division Program
 - Grant to Lahainatown Action Committee: **\$75,000**
- Department of Parks and Recreation:
 - Grant to The Lahaina Restoration Foundation: **\$191,000**
- Department of Water Supply:
 - Grant for Honokōwai/Wahikuli Watershed: **\$126,000**
 - Grant for Pu'u Kukui Watershed Preserve: **\$500,000**
 - Grant for Mauna Kahālāwai Watershed: **\$1,235,535**
- **Capital Improvement Projects:**
 - West Maui Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Compliance Sewer Rehabilitation: **\$2,000,000**
 - Collection and Materials Management Infrastructure for Recycling in West Maui: **\$2,150,000**
 - *County will acquire two strategically located parcels on the upper West side and develop two collection centers for green waste, recyclables, and large and bulky items.*
 - Olowalu Fire Station Improvements: **\$200,000**
 - West Maui Land Acquisition Development and Infrastructure Improvements: **\$3,000,000**
 - Lahaina Aquatic Center Rehabilitation: **\$4,250,000**
 - New Lahaina Community Center: **\$1,200,000**
 - West Maui Transit Center: **\$ 800,000**



COUNTY OF MAUI
Office of the Mayor
Fiscal Year 2027
Community Budget Request



PLEASE PRINT

Name: MAY LENH CANETE

Email Address: CANETEMAYLENH@YAHOO.COM

Phone: (808) 419-0811

Mailing Address: 148 IPUKULA WAY

City/Zip: LAHAINA HI. 96761

I Represent: Myself
 Organization MEO Head Start

Request/Issue: I want to express my sincerest appreciation to the County of Maui for funding MEO Headstart. It has been a huge help to families like ours to be able to bring our keikis to preschool, especially for those who cannot afford it. My child Zach Spade has been attending MEO Headstart for two (2) years now. Our lives have become easier since then. Not only do we have a place we can trust to care for our children while we work, but they also learn so much. It is a big help in shaping our children's characters and minds before they enter elementary school.

I am humbly requesting that the County of Maui keep funding this organization in hopes of continuing full-day / full-year services for our enrolled Head Start families.

Funding Request (if known): \$ _____

Responsible County Department: Human Concerns



April 17, 2026

SUBJECT: Maui County FY2024 Budget Testimony

Good evening, Council Chair Lee, Vice Chair Sugimura, and Members of the Maui County Council.

My name is Rick Nava, and I serve as Executive Director of the West Maui Taxpayers' Association.

The mayor's proposed budget of \$1.616 billion reflects an increase of \$60 million or 3.8% from previous fiscal year.

Residents of Maui County are already facing significant financial challenges, living in one of the most expensive State in the nation. Any additional cost on service fees and increase tax rates would place further pressure on our families. Many of us are struggling to keep up with the rising cost of living and many more have no choice but to leave families and friends behind and move out of Maui.

Gasoline prices have now surpassed \$5 per gallon, with no clear indication of a decrease, placing additional strain on our lives.

There's also State Bill 2694 that, if approved, would authorize *Young Brothers* to increase their shipping rates by 5% in each of the next two years, with the option to seek further rate adjustments before the PUC in the third year. These increased costs will ultimately be passed on to consumers—impacting all of us.

We cannot continue to absorb ongoing increases in annual budgets without experiencing significant impacts on our financial well-being. WMTA believes that the proposed budget increase will add more financial burden on all of us.

On another note, recently, my family and other residents of Kelaweia Mauka III were unable to leave our homes for 48 hours due to several sinkholes from the storms. This situation reflects ongoing infrastructure that has not been addressed for decades.

Maintaining roads, drainage, and flood control systems are not optional projects, they are fundamental obligations. Preventive maintenance is far more cost-effective than emergency repairs—and far less disruptive to our safety and lives.

According to the mayor's proposed budget, it includes \$79.5 million for the county's *Affordable Housing Fund* to support ten projects that will bring approximately six hundred new units. It would be helpful to know how many of these units will benefit the residents of Lahaina, and how these efforts align with the more than \$903 million in CDBG-DR housing funds.

RECEIVED AT BPEO MEETING ON 4-17-26
(West Maui)

West Maui Taxpayers Association, Inc.

PO Box 10338, Lahaina, HI 96761 | WMTAinc@gmail.com | 808-661-7990 | www.westmaui.org



Also, mayor's proposed budget would establish a new hazard mitigation section within the MEMA, focused on wildfire risk reduction, infrastructure protection and more. Can these mitigations be supported through the \$214 million already set aside for mitigation under CDBG-DR?

In addition, we respectfully request funding for the following priority needs on West Maui:

- Traffic safety improvements along Keawe Street to reduce speeding and protect motorists and pedestrians.
- Pedestrian crosswalks with flashing pedestrian warning lights connecting Lahaina Gateway to nearby housing and shops across Keawe Street.
- Install flashing pedestrian warning lights at the Keawe Street crosswalk, parallel to Honoapiilani Highway, to improve motorists and pedestrians' safety.
- At Kelawea Mauka Park, neighborhood children would benefit from the addition of safe, modern playground equipment and dedicated basketball courts to support recreation, physical activities, and community engagement.
- Additional or expanded bus shelters to support public transit.

These are essential community needs that directly impact the lives of West Maui residents.

\$25 million has been allocated for Public Services within the CDBG-DR program, which we believe is intended to support these improvements for our community. Accordingly, these items should not be included in the proposed County budget.

On behalf of WMTA, I respectfully appeal to all of you to take a close and careful look at opportunities to reduce County expenditure. We fully understand the importance of fiscal responsibility, especially during these challenging times.

However, we strongly believe that any cost-saving measures must be approached with great care. WMTA believes that HEALTH, SAFETY, and WELFARE of our residents are not just priorities, they are essential. These must never be compromised in the pursuit of budget reductions.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rick Nava', written in a cursive style.

Rick Nava
Executive Director
West Maui Taxpayers' Association

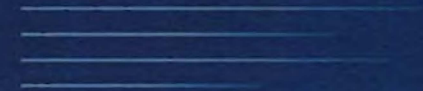
BUDGET ADVOCACY BRIEFING

West Maui Budget Priorities

A taxpayer-centered case for fiscal discipline, essential infrastructure, infrastructure, and accountable recovery spending.

Adapted from testimony submitted on behalf of the West Maui Taxpayers' Association, with official Maui County recovery-funding context added for policy framing.

Decision focus: protect residents, fund essentials, and scrutinize spending overlap.



AFFORDABILITY FIRST

Residents Are at the Breaking Point

The testimony anchors the budget debate in household reality: Maui families are already struggling, so new local cost pressure should face a very high burden of proof.

High

Residents are described as living in one of the nation's most expensive environments, with many already struggling to keep pace with daily costs.

>\$5

Gasoline prices had surpassed \$5 per gallon, adding immediate pressure to commuting, errands, and household budgets.

5% + 5%

The testimony also warns that proposed shipping-rate increases could be passed through to consumers, raising costs across the local economy.

Source: West Maui Taxpayers' Association testimony in provided PDF.

A Bigger Budget Needs a Stronger Justification

The testimony does not argue against government itself. It argues that new budget growth should be defended against a simple standard: is it essential, and is it the best use of local dollars?

\$1.616B

Proposed budget size cited in the testimony

A scale of spending large enough to demand sharper prioritization and public accountability.

+\$60M

Year-over-year increase described in the testimony

Residents are asked to absorb the effects of a larger plan while already facing high living costs.

+3.8%

Annual growth rate highlighted by WMTA

The advocacy question is whether that added burden is matched by indispensable community benefit.

Bottom line: if a spending increase cannot be tied to essential outcomes that are not otherwise fundable, it should face tougher scrutiny.

Source: West Maui Taxpayers' Association testimony in provided PDF.

Federal Recovery Funds Change the Equation

When large recovery funding is available, the County's role is to match each need to the right source of money.

\$1.6B

Maui County secured \$1.6 billion in CDBG-DR for long-term recovery and resilience.

ELIGIBLE USES

CDBG-DR can support **housing, infrastructure, public services, mitigation, and economic recovery** tied to disaster impacts.

PROGRAM RULE

Guidance says these dollars address **unmet needs** and supplement recovery rather than replace available federal capacity.

BUDGET LENS

Not every local expense can shift to recovery funds; each budget request should be tested against what recovery funds may cover.

Sources: Maui County FY 2026 budget release and CDBG-DR overview (research notes).

Do Not Charge Locals Twice

LOCAL BURDEN

Households are already carrying severe affordability pressure.

When local government expands spending without clearly separating **essential unfunded needs** from already eligible recovery uses, taxpayers risk absorbing costs twice.

If federal dollars fit the purpose, reserve local dollars for true gaps.

FEDERAL RECOVERY CAPACITY

Official recovery guidance says CDBG-DR fills unmet needs and supports key recovery uses.

Official County materials state CDBG-DR funds support **housing, infrastructure, public services, and mitigation**, and that overlap is the key policy test before using local funds.

The testimony's core question is whether Maui residents are being asked to finance needs that may already have an eligible federal recovery funding path.

Policy implication: the responsible path is disciplined funding alignment—use available recovery dollars first where eligible, and preserve County funds for needs that cannot be covered elsewhere.

Fix the Basics Before Costs Become Crises

When core infrastructure is deferred, residents experience disruption, danger, and loss of mobility — not accounting entries.

48 hrs

Families in **Kelaweā Mauka III** could not leave home due to storm-related sinkholes.

DEFERRED MAINTENANCE

Roads, drainage, and flood-control problems left unaddressed for decades turn routine upkeep into large liabilities.

EMERGENCY DISRUPTION

When access fails, costs go beyond dollars — **safety, mobility, and daily life** are interrupted.

POLICY TAKEAWAY

Preventive maintenance is far more cost-effective than emergency repair; basic infrastructure is a public obligation.

Source: West Maui Taxpayers' Association testimony.

ACCOUNTABILITY QUESTIONS

Demand Clear Answers on Housing and Mitigation

The testimony asks for clearer proof of who benefits, how funding streams align, and whether local dollars go only where truly needed.

HOUSING ALLOCATION

\$79.5M

Affordable Housing Fund amount cited in the testimony.

~600

Approximate number of new housing units referenced.

How many of those units will directly benefit Lahaina residents?

That is the key accountability question: not whether housing matters, but whether the County is transparent about **who benefits first** and how that aligns with Lahaina recovery needs.

Bottom line: before expanding local spending, decision-makers should show who benefits from housing investments, how Lahaina is prioritized, and why mitigation requires County dollars when significant recovery funding may already exist.

MITIGATION FUNDING

\$214M

Mitigation funding level the testimony says is set aside through CDBG-DR.

If major mitigation dollars are already available, why should overlapping work default to local budget growth?

The testimony asks whether wildfire risk reduction and related work should be evaluated against recovery dollars already available for mitigation purposes.

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

West Maui's Priority Needs Are Specific and Practical

The testimony does not ask for vague investment. It identifies visible, everyday improvements that directly shape how residents move, gather, and stay safe.

MOBILITY SAFETY

Traffic improvements on Keawe Street

The request calls for targeted safety measures to reduce speeding and improve conditions for **motorists and pedestrians** using this important corridor.

YOUTH & RECREATION

Kelaweā Mauka Park upgrades

Neighborhood children would benefit from **modern playground equipment** and dedicated basketball courts that support recreation, physical activity, and community connection.

Why this matters: these asks are concrete, limited, and resident-centered. They focus on safety, mobility, recreation, and basic quality of life—not abstract expansion for its own sake.

PEDESTRIAN ACCESS

Crosswalks and flashing warning lights

The testimony highlights safer crossings between Lahaina Gateway, nearby housing, and shops, including enhanced warning systems at the Keawe Street crossing near

Honoapiʻilani Highway.

TRANSIT SUPPORT

Additional or expanded bus shelters

Improved shelter capacity would strengthen the day-to-day usability of public transit and make waiting for service safer and more practical for local riders.

FUNDING MATCH

Public-Service Funds Should Cover Eligible Community Improvements

The testimony argues that certain neighborhood improvements should not automatically flow into the County budget if an appropriate recovery funding pathway may already exist.

\$25M

Public-services funding level cited in the testimony as part of the CDBG-DR framework.

NEED

West Maui priorities such as pedestrian safety, local recreation improvements, and transit-support amenities are framed as direct community needs with visible resident impact.

FUNDING LOGIC

If those improvements are **eligible under public-services recovery funding**, they should be evaluated there first rather than being automatically added to County spending growth.

DECISION STANDARD

The correct test is disciplined alignment: use the recovery source where lawful and suitable, and preserve local dollars for needs that truly require County funding.

Policy takeaway: better budgeting is not only about how much government spends. It is a funding source for the right public purpose.

Source: West Maui Taxpayers' Association testimony in provided PDF. This slide presents the testimony's funding argument as a policy-screening pr

Cut Waste, Not Safety

WASTE AND DUPLICATION

Savings should come from overlap, lower-priority spending, and misaligned funding choices.

The testimony asks decision-makers to take a close look at opportunities to **reduce County expenditure**, especially where recovery dollars may already support eligible needs.

That means disciplined scrutiny of duplicative spending, not broad reductions that ignore whether a service is essential to daily life.

Bottom line: prudent budgeting is not indiscriminate cutting. It is careful reprioritization—remove waste, align funding sources, and protect the services and infrastructure that residents rely on most.

The testimony supports careful savings—but warns that residents' health, safety, and welfare must never be compromised in the pursuit of lower spending.

PROTECTED ESSENTIALS

Health, safety, welfare, and basic infrastructure must remain non-negotiable.

The testimony is explicit: community well-being is not a discretionary category. Roads, drainage, flood control, and core public protections are **fundamental obligations**.

Responsible budgeting protects essential services first and treats public safety as the floor beneath every savings decision.

CUT WASTE
NOT SAFETY

FINAL RECOMMENDATION

The Ask: Fund Essentials, Scrutinize Overlap, Protect Residents

This is the governing standard implied by the testimony: use discipline, not drift, to decide what belongs in the County budget and what should be funded elsewhere.

Maui decision-makers should **slow down automatic budget growth**, align each project with the right funding source, and reserve local taxpayer dollars for needs that are truly essential and not otherwise coverable.

AFFORDABILITY TEST

Reconsider budget growth through the lens of household strain

Before approving added local spending, ask whether residents already under severe cost pressure can reasonably absorb its consequences.

FUNDING ALIGNMENT

Use federal recovery dollars first where they are eligible

If recovery funds can lawfully support housing, infrastructure, public services, or mitigation needs, **do not default** to County budget growth.

ESSENTIAL CORE

Preserve County dollars for true local essentials

Protect infrastructure, public safety, and other critical services that directly affect health, safety, welfare, and daily life.

Bottom line: show the public who benefits, what gets funded, why local dollars are necessary, and how each decision protects residents rather than simply enlarging the budget.

CLOSING REFLECTION

Mahalo

For West Maui families, **fiscal responsibility** and **community well-being** must move together.

Protect residents from unnecessary burden, fund true essentials, and align every public dollar with the needs that matter most.

A stronger Maui requires disciplined budgets, safer infrastructure, and transparent recovery choices.