

Great Committee

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Good afternoon,

What a great turnout this morning! I signed up to testify and after three hours, I had leave to care for loved ones. I've attached my testimony to this email. I hope it plays a part in creating a more diverse meeting in the future. I believe everything will take time as one community member said today, "all I got is time right now".

Thank you so much,
Cheryl

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With Gratitude,
Cheryl Alcantara

Testimony: GREAT Committee, September 27, 2023

Hi, my name is Cheryl Alcantara. I am here to testify that I am in support of this committee. It is a pleasure to have this committee be physically in Lahaina as your presence here signifies steps in commitment, dedication, and determination to helping Lahaina become strong as it once was or even stronger. With that said, I am primarily here to do the same thing for our Filipino Community. I want them to know their voices matter and that they are not invisible. Other fellow Filipino leaders in the community are establishing spaces to encourage and empower the people with the hopes that when we are gathered, we can be a part of the solution to the issues Lahaina Community has had for generations. This is not to discredit anyone or anything but to involve the Filipino Community by providing the necessary steps in doing so.

What I hope to see as we develop a plan in recovery and resiliency are:

1. Increase inclusivity in the Lahaina community. There are other ethnic races who have made Lahaina what it is today. This is not just a suggestion made for the Filipino Community but for all who is not recognized for their contribution into the Lahaina Community. The Filipino community are known to work two to three jobs to build a home for their family so they have a place they can call home. There is no support from outside entities to encourage and promote other ethnic cultures other than Native Hawaiians. We want our Filipino heritage and traditional history, cultural artifacts, arts and performance, included in our educational systems. I believe H.C.R. No 56 H.D. 1 is a start, " THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO IMPLEMENT A FILIPINO HISTORY, CULTURE, AND IDENTITY SOCIAL STUDIES COURSE FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS."

Suggestions - A program that serves in doing community workshop series monthly in public spaces such as the state library to educate and inform the public the history and culture of the Filipinos. We would like to begin with the first Filipinos who came to Hawaii so we can all relate at the beginning. We can include UH Manoa Phillipine Studies and other departments who are inclined to be a part of this cultural awareness. Nonprofits who sees the high need and would like to partake in ways they can.

2) To better strategize in promoting participation of public meetings and other community informational meetings (in hotels for both residents and employees) such as the Maui County Community Informational meetings, Council and Committee Meetings. Many are expressing how they didn't know anything of any of the events mentioned. Reasons such as, not big fans of social media right now, not everyone prefer to be informed through social media platforms, to be sane rather than insane due to the negativity and dangerous effects of social media. The sole purpose is to create a sense of inclusion like they have value to contribute to our community. There are conspiracy thoughts due to the fact other national origins have been on the outside circle because "this is not their land".

Suggestion-

Create small spaces at each hotel where displaced residents and employees who were affected by the fire to gather and sit, watching up to date Maui County Community Informational meetings, Council and Committee Meetings, and other approved sources relevant to being in the know of what is currently happening, the progression, and the need for support in our community. It can be where people can be comfortable, safe, and able to process information rather than an open spot where there is high traffic. Individuals find comfort knowing our intentions is to keep them close and be in the know because we want them to be a part of the decision making, thought processing, and maybe just be in the presence of other community members.

3) Housing – to finish all current housing projects especially Lahaina as soon as possible. I don't know what the logistics are, but this should be a priority. There are many vacant properties that can be modified to be temporary home placement with a full kitchen and have access to needed resources all around them.