

Aloha Kakou Council Members,

My name is Tara Murphy and I own a small business providing wedding & elopement photography on Maui. I grew up in Haiku and have been deeply involved in the wedding community for the past 10 years. I'm also a board member of the Maui Wedding and Event Association which we formed last year to unify and be a voice for our industry, promote economic growth through small businesses, while ensuring we operate with pono practices and respect towards Maui's recovery.

We currently have over 100 members including planners, chefs, servers, officiants, musicians, florists, rental companies, entertainers, etc. I wouldn't be surprised if most of you know someone who directly or indirectly works in the wedding or event industry.

I am testifying today in support of the mayors proposed \$300K to be used to host the Engage Summit next year.

Supporting weddings and events promotes the best kind of visitors for Maui County, but not only that- it generates vast amounts of revenue for our island with a ripple effect that is unmatched.

Visitors that come to Maui for their wedding are not only high spenders but they come and leave with a deep respect and love for the island because this is where they got married. After the fires, I personally had many clients ask me where and how to donate their time and money and many of them did. They learn about traditional practices during their actual wedding ceremony, when our local officiants teach them about the true meaning of aloha, and share Hawaiian values. These are visitors that get educated in the most meaningful way because it is a part of their story.

Weddings and events have a significant economic impact, and have been quietly generating incredible revenue for years. A one-week typical family vacation to Maui costs about \$10,000 but couples who come to get married spend an average of \$50,000 just on their wedding and usually much more. With their guests and guests spending that total can reach \$300,000 or more for a one week stay compared to \$10,000 from the average family. There are often over 10 weddings in one day- these are big numbers. Much of this spending goes towards hotels which are primary funders of the annual budget through property taxes, as you know

Ten years ago in 2015, Maui County had 6,070 non-resident marriages. Last year, there were only 2,491- a 59% decline.

This is why we are here. This is why we formed the Wedding and Event Association and why we are asking for your support to promote weddings and events on Maui. This decline appears to be a direct result from covid, the fires and mixed messaging about visiting Maui.

The graph will show you the number of non-resident weddings in Maui County over the last 10 years. As you can see, the numbers have been steadily declining. This decline is having a vast economic impact, but we have a solution.

RECEIVED AT BFLD MEETING ON 4/24/25