

# **WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE**

**Council of the County of Maui**

## **MINUTES**

**February 3, 2025**

**Online Only via Teams**

**CONVENE:** 9:03 a.m.

**PRESENT:** VOTING MEMBERS:

Councilmember Shane M. Sinenci, Chair  
Councilmember Gabe Johnson, Vice-Chair  
Councilmember Tom Cook, Member  
Councilmember Tasha Kama, Member (In 9:13 a.m.)  
Councilmember Alice L. Lee, Member  
Councilmember Tamara Paltin, Member (Out 10:31 a.m.; in 10:50 a.m.)  
Councilmember Keani N.W. Rawlins-Fernandez, Member  
Councilmember Yuki Lei K. Sugimura, Member  
Councilmember Nohelani U‘u-Hodgins, Member

**STAFF:**

Clarissa MacDonald Legislative Analyst  
Ellen McKinley, Legislative Analyst  
Megan Moniz, Legislative Attorney  
Criselda Paranada, Committee Secretary  
Lei Dinneen, Council Services Assistant Clerk  
Ryan Martins, Council Ambassador

Residency Area Office:

Keomailani Hirata, Council Aide, Molokai Residency Area Office  
Roxanne Morita, Council Aide, Lāna‘i Residency Area Office  
Mavis Oliveira-Medeiros, Council Aide, East Maui Residency Area Office  
Jade Rojas-Letisi, Council Aide, Makawao-Ha‘ikū-Pā‘ia Residency Area Office  
Jared Agtunong, Executive Assistant, South Maui Residency Area Office

**ADMIN.:**

Lori Tsuhako, Director, Department of Human Concerns (WASSP-1(1))  
Saumalu Mataafa, Deputy Director, Department of Housing (WASSP-1(1))  
Yukari Murakami, Deputy Corporation Counsel, Department of Corporation  
Counsel (WASSP-1(1))

**OTHERS:**

Tia Hartsock, Director, The Office of Wellness and Resilience, Office of the  
Governor (WASSP-1(1))  
Bevanne Bowers, Executive Director, Maui Mediation Services (WASSP-1(1))  
Priscilla Veilleux, Case Coordinator, Maui Mediation Services (WASSP-1(1))  
K. U‘ilani Goods, Maui/Molokai/Lāna‘i Managing Attorney, Legal Aid Society of  
Hawai‘i (WASSP-1(1))  
Jordan Hocker, Community Outreach Coordinator, Maui Housing Hui (WASSP-1(1))

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Testifiers

Coren Sprenkle York, Maui Tenants & Workers Association  
Alan Lloyd, Steering Committee, Maui Tenants & Workers Association  
Leslee Matthews, Founder and Managing Attorney, Speak Out and Up Law, LLC  
Nara Boone, Maui Housing Hui  
Lisa Darcy, Founder, Share Your Mana  
Robin Knox  
Jade Moreno, Member, Maui Housing Hui

(35+) additional attendees

**PRESS:**     *Akakū: Maui Community Television, Inc.*

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CHAIR SINENCI:   ...*(gavel)*... Aloha kakahiaka kākou, and welcome to the first Water Authority, Social Services, and Parks Committee of 2025. It's February 3rd on a Monday, and it's 9:03. Welcome, everyone. I'm Shane Sinenci, your Committee Chair. It is...I did say the time. Just a reminder for members of the public to please silence cell phones and any noise-making devices. Members, in accordance with the Sunshine Law, if you're not in the Council Chamber, please identify by name who, if anyone, is in the room with you, vehicle, or workspace today. Minors do not need to be identified. And please see the last page of the agenda for information on meeting connectivity. Joining us this morning, we have Committee Vice-Chair Gabe Johnson. Aloha kakahiaka.

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Good morning, Chair, Councilmembers, community members. There's no testifiers here at the Lānaʻi District Office. I'm alone on my side of the office with my snoring dog, Hoku-Chan *(phonetic)*, who might be louder when I'm speaking, of course. But I'm here and ready to work. Mahalo, Chair.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Vice-Chair Johnson. Also joining us this morning in the Chambers is Councilmember Tom Cook. Aloha and good morning.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Aloha, good morning, Chair. I'm here in the Chambers, and Jared's at our South Kihei office and there's no...currently no testifiers.

CHAIR SINENCI: Thank you. It looks like Pro Tem Kama is in a meeting right now, but she will join us shortly. Also joining us online is Council Chair Alice Lee. Aloha and good morning.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Aloha, good morning, Chair. And from the --

CHAIR SINENCI: Did we lose her?

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: -- northern part...

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CHAIR SINENCI: Oh.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Can you hear me?

CHAIR SINENCI: Yes, we can hear you now.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Oh, okay. And so, the Algonquins say kwey as a greeting, so kwey to all. I'm here alone in my workspace, looking forward to your meeting. Thank you.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Chair, and se kwey (*phonetic*). Also joining us online is Councilmember Tamara Paltin. Aloha, and se kwey.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Aloha kakahiaka kākou. Streaming live and direct from Lahaina Rec Center in Historic Lahaina Town. I'm at the Panina Makahiki, so there's hundreds of Kula Kaiapuni O Maui students, haumana here, and they're about ready to get started. I'm manning the hydration station, so I'll do my best to follow along. Aloha.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Member Paltin, and thank you for joining us this morning. Aloha. Also joining us online is Member Keani Rawlins-Fernandez. Aloha kakahiaka.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Aloha kakahiaka kākou, mai Molokai Nui a Hina. I'm at my private residence, alone here, and there are currently no testifiers at the Molokai District Office. And good luck to all the haumana participating in Makahiki.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo for joining us. Also joining us from the Chambers this morning is Member Yuki Lei Sugimura. Aloha and se kwey.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Se kwey and aloha. Nice to see our...our friends here from Maui Mediation. Looking forward to your meeting, Chair.

CHAIR SINENCI: Thanks for joining us. And finally, in the Chambers, we have Member Nohe U'u-Hodgins. Aloha and se kwey.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Good morning. Good morning, everyone. Happy Aloha Monday, yay to be back in Committee and in Chambers. Good to see everyone.

CHAIR SINENCI: Welcome everybody. From the Department of Human Concerns, we have Director Lori Tzuhako. Aloha and good morning, Lori. And then from the Department of Housing, I'm not sure if he's on yet, but we have Deputy Director Saumalu Mataafa. Aloha and welcome. There he is.

MR. MATAAFA: Good morning, Chair. Good morning, Committee Members.

CHAIR SINENCI: Good morning. From our Corporation Counsel, we have Yukari Murakami, Deputy Corporation Counsel. Aloha and good morning.

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MS. MURAKAMI: Good morning, Chair.

CHAIR SINENCI: Good morning. Thanks for being here. And our Committee Staff members that are here to help us conduct this meeting this morning is Ms. Criselda Paranada, aloha; Ms. Clarissa MacDonald; Ms. Ellen McKinley, welcome; Ms. Megan Moniz, our Legislative Attorney; Ms. Lei Dinneen; and also Ms. Jean Pkipala. Welcome, everybody.

**SOCIAL SERVICES RELATED TO THE END OF MAUI ISLAND'S EVICTION  
MORATORIUM** (WASSP-1(1)) (Rule 7(B))

CHAIR SINENCI: Members, on today's agenda--we'll just get right into it--we have Social Services Related to the End of Maui Island's Eviction Moratorium, WASSP-1(1). If there are no objections, Members, I would like to be able to take testimony after receiving opening comments from our panel.

COUNCILMEMBERS: No objections.

CHAIR SINENCI: Thank you, Members. Thank you. Okay. Members, today's agenda, the Social Services Related to the End of Maui Island's Eviction Moratorium. Members, tomorrow, on February 4th, 2025, Maui Island's eviction moratorium will end. The eviction moratorium was put in place following the August 8th, 2023 wildfires, and now that it's ending, landlords and tenants will need to follow Act 202 starting on February 5th, 2025. And Members, a copy of Act 202 can be found on Granicus under number 1. Members, Act 202 establishes a free state-funded mediation-based process for resolving rent disputes between landlord and tenants before going to court. Starting in February, tenants owing four or more months in rent can request mediation, and by March, tenants behind by three months can...also can. For landlords seeking to evict tenants owing two or one month of rent, those will begin later in the summer. To learn more about this process, we have the following resources with us today. Joining us online, we have Direct--Director Tia Hartsock...Hartsock from the Office of Wellness and Resilience. Ms. Hartsock is the Inaugural Director of the Office of Wellness and Resilience, housed within the Office of the Governor, Josh Green, MD. It is the first statewide office of its kind in the nation, supporting the wellness and resilience of Hawai'i's people through trauma-informed, healing-centered strategies. Also with us today in the Chambers is Ms. Bevanne Bowers, the Executive Director of Maui Mediation Services; Ms. Priscilla Veilleux, the Case Coordinator for Maui Mediation Services; as well as U'ilani Goods, the Managing Attorney of Legal Aid Society of Hawai'i, who will be available to answer questions during the discussion portion. Okay. Thank you all. Let's go to...Staff, is Director Hartsock on for opening comments?

MS. MACDONALD: Yes, Chair. She...her video just popped up.

CHAIR SINENCI: Aloha, Director.

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MS. HARTSOCK: Aloha, Chair. Thank you so much for having me. Happy to be here. We wanted to mahalo folks, especially Maui Mediation Services, for being there in-person, but mahalo, you all, for putting this on an agenda. I'm Tia Hartsock with the Office of Wellness and Resilience in the Governor's Office. We are here to kind of share information. You went over a great amount of information about the Act 202 and the lifting of the eviction moratorium, so thank you for that, but we're here to share some details on possible funding support that we've been trying to identify what's out there, help organize. We've been meeting for the last few months with folks across Maui, including Maui Mediation Services, to try and line up resources, knowing that this eviction moratorium would be coming to an end soon. So, thank you to several Councilmembers on this call, and of course, Maui Mediation Services and the judiciary, for those ongoing conversations that we've been having for...I...I believe since...since November on how to best align resources for when this hits. So, happy to answer any questions, and again, thank you for having us here.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Director. And also, thank you for meeting separately with some of the Councilmembers for their personal questions to you. And mahalo for that information. We also have Ms. Bowers and Ms. Veilleux here on the...from Maui Mediation Services for some opening comments.

MS. BOWERS: Aloha and good morning, Committee Chair, esteemed Members of the Committee and the Council. I am Bevanne Bowers, Executive Director of Maui Mediation Services. And first, I want to thank you for this opportunity to discuss this very important date, and our plans to be able to assist members of our community once the eviction moratorium is lifted at 12:01 on February the 5th. Our agency will be processing all of the cases that come under Act 202. Now, Act 202 is not the entirety of the Governor's emergency proclamation. There are far more items at play in that proclamation. Our agency is dealing strictly with evictions concerning residential landlords and tenants for unpaid rent. And Chair, as you mentioned, the rent amount must be at least four months starting February the 5th. It is incrementally increased. We have already placed on our website a number of resources for both the landlords and the tenants, as well as a notice...an example of the notice that the landlords must present simultaneously to the tenants as well as to our office. We facilitated these same types of mediation several years ago after the pandemic with Act 57, so we have an idea of what to expect, but there are still many unknowns and differences with what we're going to be dealing with, with Act 202 compared to Act 57. I would now like to introduce Priscilla Veilleux again, who is coordinating all of our cases, to briefly go over the process as it will be handled in our office.

MS. VEILLEUX: Aloha kakahiaka. This is Priscilla Veilleux, and I am from Maui Mediation Services, and I'm doing the Landlord-Tenant Case Coordinator for our agency. And on the process of when we receive an eviction notice--a copy of the eviction notice from the landlords--then what we will do is to contact our...or contact the tenants, or the tenants can contact us. And the tenants have 15 days to respond to the eviction notice. Once we receive the eviction notice, then we will contact the tenant, give them an intake, determine whether they are wildfire victims or they're not, however they--you know, if

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they were affected by the wildfire. From there, we will also do scheduling...scheduling a mediation with the landlord and tenant. Now, when we--there is a scheduled mediation, the...both the landlord and tenant need to appear. And if there are...if the tenant cancelled the mediation that was set, then the landlord can move the case--you know, going to the eviction process with the court if they choose to. Then if...also, if the tenant does not appear at the mediation as scheduled, also, the landlord can then proceed with the court procedure. If the...if they cancel...if they cancel the appointment, then, of course, they can...you know, the landlords can go with the proceedings, and also, if there is a mediation but there is no agreement, then also, the landlord can go to the court proceedings for eviction. Thank you.

CHAIR SINENCI: Thank you, Ms. Veilleux. We also have online, Director Tsuhako. If you have anything to add, Director?

MS. TSUHAKO: Not at this time. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll wait for questions at the end. Thank you.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. And then we also have Deputy Mataafa for opening comments, if you have any.

MR. MATAAFA: Thank you, Chair Sinenci, and thank you, Members of the Committee. I have no opening comments, but I will say that the Department has been working really closely with the agencies on their--that are contracted with in the Rental Assistance Program to make sure that we are prepared, once the eviction moratorium is lifted, to help assisting people. So, I will be available for questions later in the meeting. Thank you.

CHAIR SINENCI: All right. Great news. Okay. Members, we're going to go ahead to testimony. Let us begin with public testimony. Oral testimony via phone or video conference will be accepted. In accordance with the Sunshine Law, testimony can occur at the beginning of the meeting, but cannot be limited to the start of the meeting. The Chair will receive--oh, sorry, before we do, Chair would like to recognize Pro Tem Kama. Aloha and se kwey.

COUNCILMEMBER KAMA: Aloha kakahiaka, Chair. Excuse me for being tardy. I was in a meeting this morning that ran late, but I'm here and ready to talk about Mediation Services and all that they will provide. Thank you.

CHAIR SINENCI: Thanks for being here. Okay. Continuing on, the Chair will receive oral testimony for agenda items at the beginning of the meeting and as the item is called up on the agenda. Testifiers wanting to provide video or audio testimony should sign up in the lobby outside the conference room, or join the online meeting via the Teams link, or call into the phone number noted on today's agenda. For individuals wishing to testify via Teams, please raise your hand by clicking on the raise-your-hand button. And for those calling in, please follow the prompts via phone; star-5 to raise and lower your hand, and star-6 to mute and unmute. Staff will add names to the testifier list in the order testifiers sign up or raise their hands. For those on Teams, Staff will lower your

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hand once your name is added. Staff will then enable your microphone and video, and call the name you're logged in under or the last four digits of your phone number when it is time to testify. Written testimony is always encouraged and can be submitted via the eComment link at [mauicounty.us/agendas](http://mauicounty.us/agendas). Oral testimony is limited to three minutes. If you're still testifying beyond that time, I will kindly ask you to complete your testimony. We ask that you state your full name and organization, but if you prefer to testify anonymously, Staff will identify and refer to you as a "Testifier" and assign you a number. Once you're done testifying, or if you do not wish to testify, you can view the meeting on *Akakū* Channel 53, Facebook Live, or [mauicounty.us/agendas](http://mauicounty.us/agendas). Again, mahalo for your cooperation in advance. We'll be maintaining decorum. And I will now proceed with oral testimony. Staff?

**. . . BEGIN PUBLIC TESTIMONY FOR WASSP-1(1) . . .**

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the first testifier is Coren Sprenkle, to be followed by Jordan Hocker.

CHAIR SINENCI: Aloha and good morning. *(pause)*

MS. SPRENKLE: Is this on? Yes. Aloha, my name is Coren Sprenkle York *(phonetic)*. I'm from Kihei, and I'm an RN working in the emergency room at Maui Memorial Medical Center, and I specialize in psych. According to a 2024 study by University of Hawai'i, Maui County is short 46 percent of the doctors that need specializing in adult psychiatry, 81.6 is specializing in child psychiatry, as well as being short 45.8 percent of necessary emergency room doctors. This past Saturday, the ER was short six out of nine nurses, and not because they called out sick, but because there just weren't nurses to schedule. Last week, I had two juveniles waiting an extended amount of time to be flown to Queens on O'ahu for treatment because there were only two planes available to fly these children. And two weeks ago, I had five juveniles waiting on beds at Queens, some waiting eight days for an availability. Maui used to have an inpatient psychiatric unit, but with rising costs of living on the island, medical personnel are moving. My managers have told me the difficulty they have in finding traveling nurses to supply the ER and the behavioral health departments due to the high cost of housing. I, too, may have to leave because my landlord is intending to raise my rent in March with an unreasonable and unethical 15 percent, or \$450. Why? Because she's now able to do it. We have such an extreme shortage of medical staff now. Imagine what it will be like if...if these landlords are able to raise the rent higher than the 7 percent inflation costs since the fires. How many more suicidal keiki will needlessly have to suffer just so landlords can collect an extra \$5,400 a year to go on extravagant vacations or remodel their kitchens? I know for a fact that we have numerous emergency room doctors and RNs that were all affected by the fires. A lot of them lost their houses. I was sitting in the ER on the day that the fires came when I was sitting next to my very good friend who lost her house. She was thinking about moving out. She still has to pay a mortgage for a house that she can't afford. Thank you.

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CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Ms. York, for coming today, and for your testimony. Members, any questions for Ms. York? We have a question for you from Member Sugimura.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: So, you know, this is for, I guess, all of us. One of the questions when this was announced with Maui Mediation and the Governor's Office, this is about eviction moratorium, and it's not about being able to increase your rent. Could you ask later on, I guess, clarification on that? Because this is not about...the evict...the emergency proclamation is still in place, so landlords cannot raise the rent. So, just clarification for the testifier later. Thank you so much for sharing your experience.

CHAIR SINENCI: Thank you, Member Sugimura. Any other questions? Seeing none. Clarissa? Oh.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Jordan Hocker, to be followed by Alan Lloyd.

CHAIR SINENCI: Aloha, Ms. Hocker.

MS. HOCKER: Aloha, Chair Sinenci and Committee Members. My name is Jordan Hocker, and I'm a renter here on Maui. I'm currently the Community Outreach Coordinator for the Maui Housing Hui, which is a grassroots organization. We're working for equity and to empower tenants through research advocacy and education. My role focuses on educating renters, and sometimes landlords, who come to our trainings because the best outcome for tenants is one that relies on having the correct information. I'd like to thank every organization and Member here today for bringing this issue forward. Maui Housing Hui recently offered a community training and had the blessing of having Maui Mediation Services and Legal Aid Services of Hawai'i at our recent renters training, where we partnered with a local law firm to get the most accurate information and as a way to do resource outreach. I will say that on behalf of renters, we need more public clarity on what's expiring and what is not. I've heard personally from government agencies and other organizations that they're under the impression that rents can be raised, and that the entire emergency proclamation is being lifted, including the part that seeks to stabilize rents through preventing rental increases. Unfortunately, I've gotten conflicting information from both the Office of Consumer Protection and even government officials. And so if that part, which I've heard is not expiring, there needs to be a very public push to make sure that our community, both renters and landlords, are aware of this. Because we are worried about the onslaught of providing tenants with one piece of information, and then landlords being given a different information, and that creating an adversarial relationship. The point of Act 202 for mediation is to provide an amicable way forward for landlords and tenants, and we see this as a potential--I mean this is a huge hang up, so we're asking that that step be taken. Further, we are in need of getting ahead of many of the cases that pertain to Act 202, and we believe that the way that you can do that is rental assistance, not just for fire survivors, but those who are affected by the secondary disaster. And the reality is that the reduction of inventory, the inflation of rents due to FEMA, which we documented in a community report, sent out a second shockwave that functionally affected people who were not



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directly affected by the fires. And what we see now as we've been advocating, hey, we need rental assistance, that much of the assistance goes just to people who were directly affected by the fire and haven't been affected by the secondary disaster. And so, we've been calling for rental assistance behind closed doors, we've been talking about it. We've been talking about it with other agencies and pertaining to Act 202. We could significantly lessen the case load that Maui Mediation Services and Legal Aid has to happen if we could allow for an opportunity for tenants to get in good standing. And the reality is, anyone who's had an increase in their cost of living, particularly their housing, could stand to benefit if they're behind on rent. So, thank you so much for this opportunity to testify. I'll end there. . . .*(timer sounds)*. . .

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Ms. Harck...Ms. Hocker. Members, any questions for Ms. Hocker at this time? Again, thank you for that important information. Oh, we have a question for you from Member --

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Chair?

CHAIR SINENCI: -- Johnson. Go ahead, Vice-Chair.

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Would we...would--can we make you a resource, Jordan Hocker? Is that--are you free to be a resource for this?

MS. HOCKER: Yeah. I'm happy to stay on the meeting and answer any questions that...that you guys might have. Yeah.

CHAIR SINENCI: Members --

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Chair and Committee, was that...is that okay, to designate her as a resource and...for all the work she's done on the...working with the tenants?

CHAIR SINENCI: Yeah. Any--I don't see any objections, Members. Okay.

COUNCILMEMBERS: No objections.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay.

MS. HOCKER: Thank you.

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR SINENCI: Thank you, Ms. Hocker. Ms. McKinley?

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Alan Lloyd, to be followed by Leslee Matthews.  
*(pause)*

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MR. LLOYD: Aloha. Good morning, Chair and Committee Members. My name is Alan Lloyd, I live in Wailuku, I'm a tenant, and I'm a member of the Maui Tenant & Workers Association. So, we are here today, and I just wanted to point out that on the meeting notice here, it says that we are here to talk about social services available to those facing potential eviction. So, if...if you understand that there is a moratorium on eviction and rent increases, you also know that landlords are violating that moratorium. We have a hotline. We get calls every day about landlords that are evicting their tenants and landlords that are raising the rent on their tenants. Cory [sic] is an example of a landlord now, during the eviction moratorium, that is raising her rent. So...okay. So, my...my presentation here has to do with social services available to tenants who are facing eviction because they can't afford the increase in rent that the landlord is giving them. So, that's how this relates to this hearing. Thank you. Okay. So, we began our campaign about one year ago for rent stabilization, and rent increases are still occurring, just as I outlined, even with the moratorium. So, that's our concern. We have a moratorium, rent increases are still occurring, which will lead to evictions. Okay. Rent increases are a form of violence against tenants, and especially against families that have children, which disturbs their school schedule, makes them...makes them have to change schools. All right. And in case we still don't know that there still is a rental emergency, and rents are high and increasing, even with more housing available now. We have had some more housing come online. So, let me give you an example--well, again, this is about rents. Let me give you an example. In Lahaina, the average rent for a two-bedroom--this was in November and December of last year--was \$4,083, and the HUD Fair Market Rent for two bedrooms is \$2,309. So, that's pretty high still. And let's look at Kihei. For a...for a one-bedroom, the average is 2,575, and the HUD Fair Market Rent is 1,762. We're also going to go to Makawao. I just pulled up some listings. . . .(timer sounds). . . Okay. How many...how long do I have left?

CHAIR SINENCI: 30 seconds, Mr. Lloyd.

MR. LLOYD: 30 seconds. Okay. So, let's get down to...so...also, one last thing, UHERO study. Households impacted by the fire are paying an average of 43 percent more rent for the same or fewer bedrooms. So, we're also concerned about the fire survivors. On March 1st, they're going to have to pay rent. And also...yeah. Okay. So, we have two requests. First, in the '24, and the '25, '26 Mayoral Budget and the Council Budget, that you include . . .(timer sounds). . . rental assistance for fire survivors--and since I can talk loud, one more--that the County Council propose and pass rent stabilization legislation to control the rent increases. Thank you.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Mr. Lloyd. Hold on. Is there any questions for Mr. Lloyd, Members? Great suggestions. Thank you for being here this morning.

MR. LLOYD: Okay. Thank you.

CHAIR SINENCI: I believe Ms. Matthews was next? (pause)

MS. MATTHEWS: Good morning, Committee Chair --

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CHAIR SINENCI: Good morning.

MS. MATTHEWS: -- and Councilmembers. First, I want to give a really big shoutout and mahalo to Bevanne Bowers and her team, and Maui Mediation Services, and Managing Attorney U'ilani Goods with Legal Aid Services of Hawai'i and her team. They do an incredible job filling a need that is such a large need. My name is Leslee Matthews. I'm the founder and managing attorney for my law firm, Speak Out & Up Law, which is rooted in Proverbs 31:8 and 9. Speak up for those that cannot speak for themselves, ensure justice for those being crushed. Just speak up for the poor and the helpless and see that they get justice. This law firm was founded particularly for folks who do not have an ability to pay for legal services, don't understand legal services, have historically been excluded from receiving legal services and are thereby left vulnerable. We provide legal services and wraparound services in community. We partner with Maui Housing Hui to do our Housing Justice Program here in Hawai'i. It's particularly on Maui. We started this program in August, really, of 2023. We had been doing this work, but we found that it's better to do this work in community, to bring people the services directly to them. According to the Legal Services Corporation, 92 percent low-income Americans do...did not receive enough...any or enough legal services...legal help for 92 percent of their civil legal services. On Maui, I would believe that that number is very high, especially when we're talking about housing. They're often forced to go it alone without legal representation in disputes, and they risk losing their jobs, their livelihood, and so much more. My law firm has...does the Housing Justice Program. We ensure that we have somebody that's there present at the courtroom. Right now, at this time, the housing...the landlord-tenant court is taking place right now. People are scared. They don't understand what's happening. Even through the moratorium, my law firm has been able to help when there is not enough services through legal aid, volunteer legal services, or others, not because they don't want to, it's just...it's such a hard need to meet here on Maui. And to the nurse that spoke, we don't have enough housing for professionals to be able to do this work, and then the people that are suffering are...are...are living in a lot of danger. So, there's not enough rental assistance available to help people who are behind on their rent. If that rental assistance is available, where is it? If it can be clearly communicated. People desperately do want to pay their rent. They are terrified of what's happening today. As a social worker as well, I'm concerned about people's mental health. I'm concerned about the suicidality that surrounds housing, and we want to know directly what agencies have funding to assist right now, today. If that can be shared, myself and Maui Housing Hui are going to be holding another--this will be our second free training that we provide to the community--on February the 19th at the Cameron Center. We want to be able to . . . *(timer sounds)*. . . provide those resources to people, and we open that up. So, in closing, the eviction moratorium, to Jordan Hocker's point, there's too many unknowns. We are able to meet with people directly at the courthouse to provide civil legal services. I also sit on the Access to Justice Committees, as was appointed. The Justice...Access to Justice Committee was formed by the...by an enabling order from the Supreme Court. I sit on those committees as well. In closing, what law firms and legal assistance are able to help indigent people? If they didn't have the money to pay for their rent, they don't have the

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money to go and get adequate legal representation, and that is what's going to help people. Mediation, absolutely. But a large number of these cases will be going to court. Last thing I'll say is we keep waiting for this February 5th date. This February 5th. There are thousands of cases that are ready to proceed as of February 10th because today, the moratorium is still here, but are ready to proceed. There's thousands of people that are being impacted by this right now. And I would be remiss if I didn't mention with the recent executive orders that are coming out, how do we safeguard and protect the 32 percent of Lahaina that was foreign-born? How do they feel comfortable to seek out services? How do they feel comfortable to then answer that complaint for summons to go into court? I fear for our community, but we're here, ready to continue doing this work in community, and in collaboration with others to see that people get justice.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Ms. Matthews. Members, any questions for Ms. Matthews? We have a question from Member U'u-Hodgins.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Thank you for your testimony. You were saying thousands of people are going to be impacted on the 5th...10th, sorry.

MS. MATTHEWS: Yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: When it's enacted on the 5th.

MS. MATTHEWS: Um-hum.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: What do you think is like their biggest issue? Is it being evicted or--because we're having like two different discussions --

MS. MATTHEWS: Yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: -- today. But that was my question is, how many people can we assume this is going to impact? And you're the only one to provide us any sort of number.

MS. MATTHEWS: Yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Can you please tell us how you got to that number, and what's kind of their main issue?

MS. MATTHEWS: Yeah. What's really amazing is to work with people--like I'm a researcher, attorney, social worker, all that. Maui Housing Hui has been able to do a lot of data collection. So, we are there almost every Monday at the landlord-tenant court, so we're able to meet directly with people and gather some of these statistics. I would love to see the judiciary release, how many comp...land...some repossession cases they already have. Because when the moratorium happened, they were already summary possession--also known as eviction--cases that were already there. So, what's been

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happening every Monday is, those people still have to come to court every time, and then those cases are pushed down until the moratorium is ended. So, since August 9th, since the moratorium went into effect, we already had those cases. Landlords have already filed those cases, and they're held if they've already--there. They're...they're also going about it in other creative ways...filing for a subset money damages so they can go after people for the money damages, but still stay in court. So, there's literally thousands. These are our kids, our families, our community, that are facing this. So, I think a more accurate number could be sought from the judiciary. Maui...two other places that I've gotten research from is the UHERO public health report that was dated May 15th, 2024; the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development 2024 Annual Houseless...Homeless Assessment Report to Congress dated December 2024--and that statistic is that Hawai'i's houselessness has increased 87 percent, when the national average is 18. And that is...and the...and HUD ties that directly back to what's happening here on Maui. So, I'm excited that we're thinking about what's happening...what's happening, but it's already happening. We meet with people...just this week alone, I'm going to meet with kūpuna from one of our places that does subsidies for people who are elderly. I'm going to meet--we have so many consultations just this week alone to help people that are already in this situation. So, I hope that answers your question.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: It does. Thank you very much.

MS. MATTHEWS: Thank you.

CHAIR SINENCI: Thank you, Member U'u-Hodgins. Next, we have a question for you from Member Paltin.

MS. MATTHEWS: Yes.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: That was going to be my question. Thank you.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Any other questions, Members, for Ms. Matthews? Seeing none. Thank you for being here this morning.

MS. MATTHEWS: Thank you.

CHAIR SINENCI: Ms. McKinley?

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next --

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Oh, Chair, if it's okay...if --

CHAIR SINENCI: Oh.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: -- we can send the question that she said to the judiciary under your signature, that would be great.

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CHAIR SINENCI: Staff, you got...her question to the judiciary? Okay. Duly noted.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Nara Boone, to be followed by Lisa Darcy.

CHAIR SINENCI: Aloha, Ms. Boone.

MS. BOONE: Aloha. Good morning, everyone. My name is Nara Boone. I am also with Maui Housing Hui, and I'm someone that has experienced housing insecurity during the COVID shutdown. I was really excited when I saw the mention of social services in the announcement of this meeting on the agenda because while I'm thrilled that Maui Mediation Services is offering what they are, we need more for our community. I've been really impressed with the testimony that's happened so far. So many people have covered the topics that I would like to cover, but the main thing I would like to say is that our community needs and deserves rental assistance. Something that seems to have been overlooked in...in our...all of us, the collective effort to assist with fire survivors and fire recovery, is that our greater community has been affected by this fire, and has not received enough assistance in general. We have thousands of people that are traumatized. We have thousands of people that were affected by the tourism industry, or that...that worked in Lahaina and lost their job. I saw a report that one-third of people that worked in Lahaina have been displaced since the fire, so where is the assistance for them? As Jordan mentioned, we have gotten really conflicting information from government officials and the Office of Consumer Protections in regards to the understanding that the entire emergency proclamation is going away, not just the moratorium on evictions for nonpayment of rent. So, it...it...it would be great if there was a public announcement made. Maui Housing Hui has worked with Tia's office, the Office of Wellness and Resilience, and we created graphics that were shared out by the Governor's Office in regards to the moratorium and Act 202, but obviously . . .*(laughing)*. . . if the other end of the landlord-tenant hotline is giving incorrect information, we need to get more out there. We need to get the correct information out there. I'm concerned that fire survivors are going to have to start paying a portion of their rent come March 1st. So, we have not only all of us that were indirectly affected by the fire, struggling financially and to cover rents, we now have fire survivors that are also going to be in need. I want to stress that we don't have safe spaces for people to park and sleep overnight. We don't have campgrounds. We don't have enforcement. Councilmember Yuki Lei Sugimura said that landlords . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . they cannot raise rents, but they are raising rents. Landlords are raising rents. And they can, even under the emergency proclamation, if they can document and show operational costs, or if it was written into the lease already. Everyone is traumatized. If we get rental assistance for people, in addition to mediation, then not only do tenants dig themselves out of the hole and keep a roof over their head, but landlords get the much-needed assistance they need to pay their mortgages as well. So, again, thank you so much for holding this meeting, and I look forward to working with many of you on the screen again soon. Mahalo.

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CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Ms. Boone, for your testimony this morning. Members, any questions for Ms. Boone? Seeing none. Again, thank you for participating. Next, I believe we have Ms. Darcy online. Aloha, Ms. Darcy.

MS. DARCY: Good morning, Chair, good morning, Committee. It's nice to see everybody, and I want to thank you for putting this on the agenda. I'm going to echo--my name is Lisa Darcy, and I am the founder of Share Your Mana, which was formed just to address these issues over seven years ago, and based on 22-plus years of experience on Maui.

CHAIR SINENCI: Lisa, you're coming --

MS. DARCY: I am a member of the --

CHAIR SINENCI: You're coming on a little soft. If you can speak a little louder, or...or move closer to the mic, please.

MS. DARCY: Oh God, I'm...

CHAIR SINENCI: . . .*(laughing)*. . .

MS. DARCY: . . .*(laughing)*. . . No, please. Okay. I will...I will speak a little louder.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay.

MS. DARCY: I am a member of the Hawai'i Public Housing Authority Board, and I represent Maui County. Today, I am here as a member of Share Your Mana and of the community that is--already previously spoken. The testifiers before you are bringing up the issues that I think many of you, for the last 20-plus years, know that Share Your Mana has supported, that we do not have enough places where people can exist and live safely, and so that they can thrive. We have done studies, we have done reports. Even the inaccurate ones show that...that we're in a level of crisis per capita, and this is well-known, well-documented. I applaud asking for the numbers; however, this is an ongoing issue. I want to urge this Committee to be bold, and to take actions even if they seem like they are out of the norm of what you usually do, and to support all of the people who are really bringing this issue to light. Maui, there's...there's...we spend so much money on the crisis, and not enough money on the solution. So, I just want to urge everyone here to be bold. I spoke with one of our representatives regarding a state bill this morning, and they tried to tell me how to do my testimony, all this, and I said I just want to remind you that you actually work for me, and I'm telling you what I need, so I need you to help me so we can work together. And so, I want to give you permission to be bold, and to listen to everybody who has been on this call and has that experience and the knowledge. And put this together. and let us...let us...let us help solve this right now. So, go for it. And thank you again, Chair, for this important...this important dialogue.

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CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Ms. Darcy, for joining us this morning. Members, any questions for Ms. Darcy? Seeing none. Thank you again for your testimony.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next and last person signed up to testify is Robin Knox.

CHAIR SINENCI: Aloha, Ms. Knox.

MS. MCKINLEY: Ms. Knox, you're muted. *(pause)*

MS. KNOX: Okay. There we go. Mahalo for hearing my testimony. Good morning. I wanted to also support the idea of rental assistance, especially with deposits. Because it could be, you know, 6 to \$10,000 for a family to get into housing right now with first month's rent and deposits. I wanted to give you an example of one person I know who could use that type of assistance. Single mom, lived on Front Street in her aunty's house with her three children. She's had trouble accessing all of the different support available to fire victims because it was not her house, and other complications like that. She's living...she found...she was on the mainland. She was able to come back, bring her children back. She's in housing right now, but her landlord, giving her no notice, is telling her she has to move because he wants to move his daughter in. And this, and other situations unaware of, seem to be potential violations of the moratorium rules. And I just wonder how those rules on rent increases, and who you can--you know, under what circumstances you can break a lease with a tenant, how those are being enforced, and is there some way to anonymously report? Maybe a County agency that it could be reported to, and that agency could advocate. Because people are afraid, and they're traumatized. I also want to second the...the thing on the...the homeless...houseless resources. I'm especially concerned about South Maui. I work in the gulches and in the wetlands, and that is where our houseless population lives. And they're in extreme danger with the kind of storm events we've had. And there is no shelter available in South Maui. There's no, you know, safe parking, there's no homeless shelter, and the County was even slow to open up the emergency shelters when we have an approaching storm. So, I don't want to see another death associated with floods, or any harm come to any person because they were houseless and living in the gulch. So, if you could please look into those issues as well. Mahalo.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Ms. Knox, for your testimony. Members, any questions? Seeing none. Thank you for your testimony.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Jade Moreno. She's currently the last person signed up.

CHAIR SINENCI: Aloha, Ms. Moreno.

MS. MORENO: Aloha, Councilmembers. Thank you for holding this topic and public testimony today. I'm a member of Maui Housing Hui, and a community member who has also had to find housing during the...since the wildfires. So, I'd like to speak on two fronts. And first is the personal front. When people are looking for housing here, we are competing



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with one another for such a low inventory. And I just want to mention how difficult that is, adding to the stresses and trauma to fire survivors in the greater community who's been traumatized by this experience. In addition to that, I'd like to talk about the research. I appreciate the request for numbers. I'm a researcher with the Maui Housing Hui, and numbers are meaningful, but they're difficult to measure here for several reasons. And with or without those numbers, we all recognize that there is a housing crisis. It...it existed before the wildfires, and it has only grown since then. Data from UHERO has helped us put some of those numbers in place, and other organizations, like CHNA [sic], have been working hard to do that as well. MauiWES has been working hard to do that. The resources are growing, but we all work in this fear, and...and we live here, and we hear these stories, so we know that the housing crisis exists. I really want to echo the call for rental assistance and clarity of information. Our community members will benefit from the idea of certainty and . . .(inaudible). . . funds. Landlords will be made whole. Renters can get caught up. Mediation is one step towards a solution, but we all recognize that we need to look at a more creative approach and implement many different elements to start to reduce the upper pressure on this rental market. I appreciate your time. Thank you.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Ms. Moreno. Members, any questions for Ms. Moreno at this time? Seeing none. Thank you for your testimony.

MS. MORENO: Thank you.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, there's currently no one else signed up to testify. If you would like to testify, please raise your hand on Teams by pressing the raise-your-hand button. And Chair, seeing no one.

CHAIR SINENCI: Countdown? No need? Okay. Members, seeing there are no more individuals wishing to testify, any objections to closing oral testimony at this time?

COUNCILMEMBERS: No objections.

**. . . END PUBLIC TESTIMONY FOR WASSP-1(1) . . .**

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Thank you, Members. And we'll continue to have written testimony accepted as well. Okay. Members, let's go ahead, and I'd like to open the floor for questions and comments. Each Member will have three minutes for the first round, and then three minutes for additional rounds as needed. And as a reminder, we do have Ms. Hocker from the Maui Housing Hui that we designated as a resource under 18(A) of the Rules of the Council. And we'll start with Vice-Chair Johnson for...for your first three minutes.

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Thank you, Chair. I assume this is--question's going to be for Deputy Director Saumalu in regards to the MHAF, the home...homeowner's assistance program. Is that in your department, or is that under Director Tsuhako's?

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MR. MATAAFA: Thank you, Councilmember Johnson. That program is currently under the Department of Housing.

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. So, as you heard in the testimony, there was a lot of folks who wanted to learn more about that program. So, maybe you could explain to the public who are listening, in addition to us as Councilmembers--like one of the questions I have is, how's the budget going? How many people are you reaching with this money? Do you need more money in the upcoming budget? Any hiccups according to, you know, rules and regulations that we can work on with the department? But really, that's like--kind of was an overview of the MHAF program.

MR. MATAAFA: Thank you for the question, Councilmember Johnson. And if I can clarify, today I have information talking about the Rental Assistance Program. Is that the program you're referring to, or the Maui Housing...Maui Homeowner's Assistance Program?

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Oh, I'm sorry.

MR. MATAAFA: . . .*(inaudible)*. . .

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: You're...you're exactly right. The Rental Assistance Program, right.

MR. MATAAFA: Okay. So, I'll start with a general overview. We do work with four different agencies, which is MEO, Women Helping Women, Ka Hale A Ke Ola, and Family Life Center. So, our staff is in constant contact with each of those agencies, and especially since the no...the announcement of the moratorium being lifted. And so, in the past couple weeks, we have really talented staff that has been working back and forth with those agencies, and they're all prepared for February 5th once that announce...once that moratorium is lifted. So, as far as funding goes, they all have adequate funding to date, and we do have a little bit left over in the overall amount that we can adjust as we...we move forward, seeing what the need may be and doling that out --

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Great.

MR. MATAAFA: -- to each agency as a need arises. So, right now, there currently is enough funding for those agencies, and the department does have the ability to shift that funding around if one agency may need it more than the other. So --

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Awesome.

MR. MATAAFA: -- we're kind of in a holding pattern. We're waiting to see what happens, but each agency is on notice, when that eviction notice moratorium does get lifted, to be prepared.

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VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. I know it's--be hard for you to speak on their capacity--MEO's capacity, Women Helping Women--but maybe if there's some feedback, you can tell us. But how's your capacity as a department? Are you guys able to administer the funds?

MR. MATAAFA: Yes, we're able to administer the funds in the department.

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. This next question . . . *(timer sounds)*. . . is...I'm going to wait until the next round. . . *(laughing)*. . .

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Mahalo...

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: So, okay. Thank you for your time. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Member Johnson. Next, we have Member Cook, followed by Pro Tem Kama.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Thank you, Chair. My question's addressed to any one of our gracious resource people. Thank you for coming today. What is the...there's a...there's a lot of people lined up for the court...to get into the court...who are in the court system or are lined up to get into the court system. Is there a...kind of a timeline worked out to how long it takes on average per case? Because--what's the judiciary's capacity to be able to process this volume of work?

CHAIR SINENCI: Ms. Bowers? Or...yeah, there you go.

MS. BOWERS: Councilmember, I can speak from our position of being at the courthouse every Monday to address residential landlord-tenant cases. And on average, every half an hour it changes from the answer period, where you've been served and you have to make your initial appearance, to returning usually about two weeks later to a status hearing. So, this can, in normal times, be something that lasts months just going back and forth. And if there hasn't been service made on the tenant, that will extend it even longer. So, it's not really measurable to ask what the timeline is because you've got various factors. And that's also going to be the case after the 5th because it is so critically important that we're able to get in touch with tenants.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: I don't...I don't want to interrupt you, but limited time. You did answer my question by sharing your experience, and that is...it seems like that is the missing link, the elephant in the room, of this discussion, is...because even if there is financial resources available, is it a matter of if they're in the court system at some point in time, that would--if it doesn't happen during mediation, and money's become available afterwards to either assist the tenant and landlord, or preferably both, it just seems like this is going to take forever, and there's not a resolution in process. This...

MS. BOWERS: I would sincerely hope that there are resources that do indeed become available. Because I've been in touch with the district court judges here, and say a tenant does not respond in time, and they do indeed come to the courthouse, the judges

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are inclined, if they are asking for an opportunity to mediate, to, again, extend it to give them that opportunity.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Thank you, Chair. That's...I'm going to listen and hopefully learn, so...

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Member Cook. Next, we have Pro Tem Kama, followed by Chair Lee.

COUNCILMEMBER KAMA: Thank you, Chair. So, I think I wanted to get back to Director...Deputy Director Mataafa about the Homeowner's Assistance Program. How much money do we have left, and how many people can we help?

MR. MATAAFA: Thank you, Chair. And thank you, Councilmember, for the question. We currently have 2.67 million encumbered. We do have a little bit of a cushion left over that we typically use around this time to move the funding around as it...as a need arises. I'd have to get back to you on the number that we can help with because each agency is a little bit different with their program requirements. So, I don't have that fact or figures for you to...at this moment, but we do have a couple hundred thousand that we can move around right now to be available for...for participants in the programs.

COUNCILMEMBER KAMA: Thank you. And then I think my next question is for Mediation Services. So, the time that it takes for the tenant to...for...for the landlord to...to...to actually give the tenant the notice, and then they go through the mediation process, and...and however long that may take, and then what...what has...what has been the average in terms of that? Because as...as each day goes by, right, those tenants...or as each month goes by, those tenants are still going to have to pay rent, and they're...so that means if they were four months behind, they could conceivably be five months. It's depending on how long this process takes, correct?

MS. BOWERS: We are aiming, Councilmember, to handle the mediations as soon as we are able to have contact between both of the parties. Landlord must be in touch with us. The challenge that I'm seeing is, if a tenant has moved, or isn't aware that the landlord has even tacked a notice on their door, which would be sufficient notice, they might totally miss out. And if we don't have a mediation initially scheduled within 30 days, they are allowed to proceed at the courthouse. So, timing is critical with this process.

COUNCILMEMBER KAMA: So, the landlord has to be contacted?

MS. BOWERS: No, the tenant has to be contacted.

COUNCILMEMBER KAMA: The tenant has to be contacted. Okay.

MS. BOWERS: The landlord must contact, simultaneously, the tenant.

COUNCILMEMBER KAMA: So, what are we doing to make sure that all the tenants...because what I've heard this morning is that not enough communications...there's been some

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miscommunication. And so, what is that...that needs to get out there, and what are we doing to make sure that it all gets out there?

MS. BOWERS: We have prepared, in seven different languages, flyers that we are dispensing to various community agencies. We have on our website. Every opportunity such as this where we can explain to our community what is going on. But of course, we still have pockets that don't know what's going on. . . .*(timer sounds)*. . .

COUNCILMEMBER KAMA: Okay. Next round. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Pro Tem Kama. Next, we have Chair Lee, followed by Member Paltin.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Thank you. I am also interested in the numbers. I think we need to have a better handle on how many people are being affected so we know how much money is needed to help them. So, Chair, I heard that you will be trying to get those numbers for us so we can deal with them more concretely, the issue more concretely. Saumalu, Deputy Director of Housing, I'm wondering how are our HUD vouchers being impacted?

CHAIR SINENCI: Deputy?

MR. MATAAFA: Thank you, Chair. Is there a more specific question there? I think we're okay right now with our HUD vouchers, but is there is something in particular you're asking as far as impact goes?

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Well, the...the...what...we're talking in the context of landlords raising their rents. So, where--are HUD vouchers impacted initially because the landlords couldn't raise their rents, and now they can raise their rents? Is that going to impact our vouchers?

MR. MATAAFA: I'll have to get back to you on that question, Alice. I'll have to touch base with our Housing Program Manager at Section 8, and I can give you information in writing, if that's okay.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Yeah, that...that would be wonderful. Because my understanding, okay, is that we have approximately 1,500 households on the voucher program?

MR. MATAAFA: That's correct.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay. And I know that it runs about \$26 million, the whole program itself, and then of that, we get about 10 percent to run the program --

MR. MATAAFA: Um-hum.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: -- for HUD. So, I...I just would like to know the impact, if any, of what's going on with moratorium on the...on the...the HUD program. And then you

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mentioned \$2.67 million encumbered. So, what was the initial amount that we set aside for rental assistance?

MR. MATAAFA: Thank you, Chair Lee, for the question. So, we have \$3 million appropriated, what's been encumbered to date is 2.7...about 2.7 million, and then what's been spent to date is a little over 2.2 million --

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay.

MR. MATAAFA: -- between all four programs.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: So, I'm sure that all of you are trying to adjust to what is coming down the pipe. So, have you inquired as to how much more money we need with regard to the Rental Assistance Program?

MR. MATAAFA: Thank you again for the question. Yes. So, our staff is working closely with each of the agencies, and right now, we're in the period--which happens in the fiscal year, the typical fiscal year--where we're working with the agencies to see how much more money they may need, and adjusting that additional leftover fund. So, we're just in that process right now, and right now, it doesn't look like we need any more . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . added. But that might change. So, we'll --

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay.

MR. MATAAFA: If it does change --

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Thank you.

MR. MATAAFA: -- we'll come back to you folks.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Thank you. Okay. So, you are working on this issue in...in anticipation of all these changes coming up. Thank you.

MR. MATAAFA: Correct. Thanks.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Chair Lee. Next, we have Member Paltin, followed by Member Rawlins-Fernandez.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you, Chair. I think my first question would be for Ms. Jordan Hocker, or someone from the Housing Hui. When you were saying that--shucks, I'm not sure if it was you exactly--but folks were saying that landlords and tenants are not clear that rents can't be raised, and the rest of the emergency proclamation is still in effect, and that you're getting not-good answers maybe from the Office of Consumer Protection; is that correct?

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MS. HOCKER: Yes. So, what we've been hearing and seeing is...so, like Nara had stated, we've been in communication with the Office of Wellness and Resiliency [sic] and gotten that clarification from the Governor's Office that the portion for rental increases is not expiring, just the part that protects people from being evicted if they haven't paid their rent. However, I made a personal call to the Office of Consumer Protection for the Maui Division, you know, and I said, hey, you know, what...what are you informing the community? And he said the last information that we were given was that the entire emergency proclamation was going to expire. And, you know, Maui Housing Hui knows that that's not the case, and we're doing our due diligence to put out into the community, in any way that we can, but I...I do believe that information is being given out to landlords that states otherwise. And so, yeah, our...our concern is that the...the...if...right, as Councilmember Yuki...Yuki Lei Sugimura had said, right, that's...the portion for rental increases isn't expiring, but we do believe that there is enough of the community that is not in the loop on that, that it...it can cause issues.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Okay. So, then I guess...I don't know who from the state would take the lead on this, if it's Deputy Campos or Director Hartsock, but is there a way that we can get the state all on the same page, what the Office of Wellness says, to the Office of Consumer Protection, and for a government agency to take the same initiative as Maui Mediation Services by getting the information out on, you know, like a press release, some social media mems (*phonetic*) in a bunch of the different languages similar to what they had? I mean, I guess even sharing Miss...Ms. Bowers' information to the masses. Who in the state would head that up?

CHAIR SINENCI: Director Hartsock?

MS. HARTSOCK: Yes. Thank you for that. Aloha, Councilmember Paltin. Great question. I...I wanted to clarify a few things. What--to Jordan Hocker's comment really quick, the...I think it's a nuanced answer that . . . (*timer sounds*). . . Consumer Protection Office is...is answering. Eviction moratorium is set to...I'm sorry, the emergency proclamation is only good for 60 days every time it's posted. So, they technically are set to expire every 60 days. However, the Governor's intention is to renew them every single 60 days until we are no longer in an emergency. So, technically, yes, emergency proclamations can only be in effect for 60 days. However, we have had confirmation from Governor that he will continue to extend the...the emergency proclamations. The other part of this is, there is the rental increase moratorium that will still be in place. I have been informed, as of 20 minutes ago, another confirmation from the Attorney General's Office that the rental increase is still in place. The eviction moratorium will be expiring, but the...but the rental increase portion is still in place. And the Attorney General's Office has received over 250 complaints to date relating to the emergency proclamation, specifically about housing violations. We were told that there was about 171 that were determined to not be a violation, about 35 were corrected, and about 41 are still under investigation. Those are the latest numbers that we have. That was stated in a press release and an...and article on *Hawai'i News Now*. So, I can drop that article in the...in the chat. We are also...we also got confirmation from the Attorney General's Office about

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20 minutes ago--because I wanted to make sure I had the most up-to-date information for this meeting--residential rent increases can currently only happen under a limited set of circumstances: one, to cover documented increased operating expenses by the landlord; or two, for some affordable and workforce housing projects that have regulatory agreements allowing reasonable rent increase to ensure that operational and maintenance costs can continue to be covered without jeopardizing the projects. Those are the only two reasons that there are...that...that landlords can increase rent because--but there still will be a residential rent freeze remaining in place past February 4th. To answer Councilmember Paltin's question, we have been posting on Governor's social media. There has been articles in the news. We--I can definitely reach out to...we've been talking to the...the...the...again, we've been meeting regularly with Councilmembers, your...your folks' constituents on Wednesdays, trying to inform as much information as we can through our ongoing Maui Strong mental health meetings, and then we've been meeting with the Councilmembers them...as much as we need to. There's actually an event tonight. It was supposed to be last week, but there's an event tonight at Cameron Center, I believe. But Bevanne is sitting there, I--it was rescheduled because of the weather last week. But there is an event tonight at Cameron Center to go over information around...around this. There was a meeting a week and a half ago that about 100 people showed up to, trying to get the correct information that we provided as well at that meeting. We have--I'll...I'll stop there. I...I hope --

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay.

MS. HARTSOCK: -- that answered your question, Councilmember Paltin.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: I guess my question was more like, you know, Hula Girl washed up at Honolulu Bay. I called the media to get the story out, they came and like, you know, did a...did a story on the news. Is there not a way that the state government can call, just like Chelsea Davis, all the news...news outlets, Gary Kubota, you know, the same way as--like this is big news. I don't know that all the tenants and all...all the landlords are going to meetings because, you know, life. So, I mean, if...if we can like blitz the media somehow, that...that the rental increase moratorium is not over, as well as lay out the process laid out in Act 202. Because I'm sure that majority of the people that are facing this aren't aware of that whole thing, you know, the steps, and how to prevent things like that. So, I guess that...that was my...my more pressing question, is if...if we can do some sort of media blitz to get the information you just got 20 minutes ago out, to get the information, the process laid out in . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . Act 202 out. Sorry. Thank you.

CHAIR SINENCI: Yeah. And Member Paltin --

MS. HARTSOCK: Are we allowed to answer, or...

CHAIR SINENCI: We'll go one for now, but it looks like Chelsea's here, so Chelsea is on it. . . .*(laughing)*. . . Okay. We'll go--hold on, Director Hartsock.



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COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Mahalo, Chelsea.

CHAIR SINENCI: Yeah. Member Rawlins-Fernandez will have some questions. Go ahead.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo, Chair. I'm...I'm happy to allow Director Hartsock to respond to the question or comments.

CHAIR SINENCI: Director?

MS. HARTSOCK: Thank you, Councilmember. Okay. Thank you. There was a press...a press release done, and...and several stories run on the 29th of January, so we can do it again. I will let our comms folks know to make sure we clarify those--that very specific detail. I also have asked the Attorney General's Office...Councilmember, I asked Attorney General's Office if possibly we could get a...like a...like a...a letter from the Attorney General stating that specifically so that tenants could utilize that letter, and provide it to the landlords, and say, here's the...here's the information. Here's a letter from the Attorney General's. This is how it's specifically laid out. This is what's legal, this is what's not legal right now. We are encouraging folks to reach out to the Attorney General's Office at hawaiiag@hawaii.gov--that's their email, I can drop it in the chat--in order to provide information on any...any landlords that are increasing rent past this time, or that have. They...they are actively doing investigations, and they are actively taking a lot of calls and have been for several months now. But I...I...I agree with you. We've been...I don't think we've...we...we got to keep getting this information out as much as possible. So, I'm glad Chelsea Davis is...did you say Chelsea...Chelsea was there? I'm glad she's there. We're happy to have Gov's Office comms talk to her more about some of those details, and...and get the Attorney General's information specifically.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo, Director. And mahalo, Chelsea, for being there, too. So, regarding Member Paltin's question, I'll just stick to comms. Social media. So, you know, like laying out the...the steps in Act 202 so that it's really easily digestible and easy to share for like Maui Housing Hui, you know, Lahaina Strong folks, Tenants Association, so that they can just really flood social media so that more people will be able to see it. Is...can that be done as well?

MS. HARTSOCK: Yes, definitely. We posted on Gov's social media. We reposted...I know Maui Housing Hui reposted. We can continue. I'll...I'll see if comms can repost again because of the timeliness of this, especially tomorrow. I'll...I'll make sure that that's done. The--I...I want to correct my comment before. The event tonight is at MEO at 3:30. And so, there...there's an event tonight at 3:30 about Act 202 specifically, outlining what that means, what that--and we can make sure that we have very clear talking points around what--the rental increase . . . *(timer sounds)*. . . freeze is still in effect. The other piece of--oh, sorry.

CHAIR SINENCI: Go ahead, Director. You can finish up real quick.

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MS. HARTSOCK: The other piece of that, again, I will make sure...I'll...I'll work with Governor's comms right now to make sure that we have the correct information, and very specifically point it out about the rental increase freeze. I'm...I'm hoping a letter from the AGs is something that is wanted, and hopefully we can have that posted so that folks can download it, print it out, and show their landlords, but--if that's helpful. I just want to make sure that...that that's going to be helpful for folks.

CHAIR SINENCI: Thank you, Director. It looks like --

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo, Director. Mahalo, Chair.

CHAIR SINENCI: Thank you, Member Rawlins-Fernandez. It looks like that'll be helpful for some of our people out on...helping with those tenants. Next, we have Member Sugimura, followed by Member U'u-Hodgins.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Thank you, Chair, for having this meeting. It's very timely because tomorrow's the big day, I guess, so to speak. I'm grateful to hear the response from the Governor's Office, having that letter available for land...tenants to give to their landlords. And can you please repeat the email address again for people who have concerns?

MS. HARTSOCK: Yes. It is [hawaiiag@hawaii.gov](mailto:hawaiiag@hawaii.gov).

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Okay.

MS. HARTSOCK: I'll...I'll put it in the chat --

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Okay. Thank --

MS. HARTSOCK: -- right now.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Thank you very much.

MS. HARTSOCK: Oh no, I can't put it in the chat. [Hawaiiag@hawaii.gov](mailto:Hawaiiag@hawaii.gov).

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Okay. So, that means people, both sides, who may have questions can email this and...and get answers, or get a response. I'm hearing...Chair, I wonder if on another meeting, you might want to ask FEMA to come and talk about their rental program. Because the date, March 1st, is talking about when FEMA's rental direct lease is going to be changing. And it's getting mixed up in this conversation, but it's two separate things. From what I learned--Chair Lee directed me to talk to FEMA just to get educated--and what FEMA is doing, that come February 1st, they're...people who have been on their direct lease program that we've been hearing about with short-term vacation rentals and, you know, that help for those...those wildfire victims, that FEMA has been...will be working with them to figure out a new rental amount that

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will be then due come March 1. But I wonder if you could schedule another meeting, just so that people can get that clarified.

CHAIR SINENCI: Yeah. We're already getting calls, so --

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Yeah.

CHAIR SINENCI: -- sure. Yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: That's...that's the confusion. Maui...Maui Mediation Services, you did say in your presentation that you get...you talk to the tenants to see if they were wildfire victims. Can you please explain that?

MS. VEILLEUX: When we speak to the tenants to see if they are wildfire victims, we would ask them how were they affected, if they were affected by the wildfire, whether it's loss of residence, loss of job, or anything that, you know, would indicate that they were part of that, or they were affected in some way. Because they...though they may not lose a house, maybe their house wasn't there, but they...their employment was a business who was in Lahaina, and it got destroyed.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Oh, okay. Wait. One second.

MS. VEILLEUX: Um-hum.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Does that...the reason why you--oh, why are you asking that question? Is it that then they get special consideration, or--whereas the rest of the community that may . . . *(timer sounds)*. . . have lost their--I'll wait.

MS. VEILLEUX: You want to answer that?

CHAIR SINENCI: Go ahead. You can answer. Oh.

MS. BOWERS: Let me answer that for you --

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay.

MS. BOWERS: -- Councilwoman. We are tracking different data areas. So, we are asking to see how many of the people that we are able to make contact with were indeed affected by the wildfires since the entire moratorium affected not just those suffering from the fires, but our entire community.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Um-hum.

MS. BOWERS: So, it's just a tracking mechanism --

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Oh.

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MS. BOWERS: -- so we better know who we're serving, and who is able to reach back out to us.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Oh, okay.

MS. BOWERS: It's nothing punitive in any way, or nothing to set them to --

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: I thought they would get something more. So --

MS. BOWERS: We want something more.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Yeah.

MS. BOWERS: That's the biggest difference now between 202 and 57.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: COVID and...yeah. Thank you for that clarification.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Member Sugimura. Next, we have Member U'u-Hodgins.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Thank you, Chair. Can I also ask before I ask my questions, can we take a bio break after my...my questions?

CHAIR SINENCI: I might have one question.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Oh, okay.

CHAIR SINENCI: But yeah, we can.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Okay. Thank you. I don't want to miss anything, but I've been holding it for a while.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: For Maui Mediation Services, I did take a look at your website, and you do have great, like, one-pagers of information for tenants, landlords, and additional resources that might be great for other people to repost. I found them quite informative. I do want to know your opinion on how many households do you think this is going to impact?

MS. BOWERS: Councilwoman, the number...it would be a wild guess for me to put an actual number.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Okay.

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MS. BOWERS: I've heard 5,000 buildings were destroyed, I'm hearing 1,000 people a month are leaving our state. Right now, that is our great unknown. And because we don't have the same type of financial support that was there previously after the pandemic --

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Um-hum.

MS. BOWERS: -- how many people have already left --

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Um-hum.

MS. BOWERS: -- that will be affected. And yet, no one wants an eviction on their record --

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Um-hum.

MS. BOWERS: -- because that will make it entirely so much harder to find a new residence. And as so many people here have said, we are in a housing crisis --

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Um-hum.

MS. BOWERS: -- which is where we have been. So, right now, I can say we're preparing for a flood.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Okay. Okay. And this is going to be kind of an oxymoronic question, I...I want to preface that. I...I realize what this is going to sound like, but what are some of the unknowns that we can anticipate?

MS. BOWERS: The unknowns include --

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Besides data. Besides how many households.

MS. BOWERS: Well, the great number of people that have unpaid rent in the numbers of 15,000, 20,000 --

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Um-hum.

MS. BOWERS: -- we are already getting those types of calls. And so, when we're talking about the need for rental assistance, it is significant --

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Yeah.

MS. BOWERS: -- because we're already opening the door for those that are only four months behind. But this moratorium's been in effect over a year and a half, and we are hearing horrific stories from both sides--from landlords, and especially tenants.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Um-hum.

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MS. BOWERS: Some very egregious things that are happening. And then if we add in the complication of someone where English is a second language --

COUNCILMEMBER U‘U-HODGINS: Um-hum.

MS. BOWERS: -- or given what's going on with our politics, those that are fearful to even make contact with us, therein's another challenge that we're anticipating.

COUNCILMEMBER U‘U-HODGINS: Thank you for sharing that. I have a question about the process of mediation. I did see on your website that if an agreement's not made, then the landlords can choose to go to court. About how long do you think your mediation process takes, and then what happens if there's a standstill? How long does that standstill--if agreement cannot be made before you go, okay, you know what, you folks can work it out in court?

MS. BOWERS: Councilwoman, every mediation is different. I will say that in general, when we were doing the Act 57 mediations, they normally didn't take longer than an hour --

COUNCILMEMBER U‘U-HODGINS: Okay.

MS. BOWERS: -- and a half.

COUNCILMEMBER U‘U-HODGINS: Wow.

MS. BOWERS: But we also had . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . significantly more rental assistance available to bring to the table. And so, that's why I keep harping on the fact of the need of rental assistance. Because we don't want to be just a speed bump to the courthouse.

COUNCILMEMBER U‘U-HODGINS: Got it. Can I just ask real...one quick since she--so, without rental assistance, do you think that this mediation is going to take longer?

MS. BOWERS: No, I'm not going to say take longer because --

COUNCILMEMBER U‘U-HODGINS: Okay.

MS. BOWERS: -- we're still offering the parties the opportunity to come together. And oftentimes, this is the first time.

COUNCILMEMBER U‘U-HODGINS: Um-hum.

MS. BOWERS: We might have had tenants who were hesitant to even have a dialogue with their landlord out of fear, or the landlords might not even be on island.

COUNCILMEMBER U‘U-HODGINS: Um-hum.

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MS. BOWERS: So, it's just the opportunity to bring them together. Because no landlord wants to lose a good tenant, and no tenant wants to lose a home that they've been relying on for shelter.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR SINENCI: Yeah. Mahalo, Member U'u-Hodgins. I just have one more question, and then we can...a follow-up question, and we can take a quick break. Just a follow-up for Director Hartsock. I'm getting some...the...the AG's letter will be very helpful, but does the AG Office have any representation here on the island? And if...if some of these violations, as we heard in testimony, is happening, are there any enforcement of...of violations to rent increases?

MS. HARTSOCK: Yes. Thank you for that question. We have...so, the information that I...I just shared a little bit ago from the Attorney General's Office, they have received over 250 complaints regarding possible housing violations; 171 of them were determined not to be a violation, 35 were corrected, and 41 are still under investigation. So, I'm getting that information from the Attorney General's Office right now. They do...I do not believe they have an office on the neighbor...on Maui. However, they cover the whole state. So, the--we're being told that anyone from anywhere needs to be contacting hawaiiag@hawaii.gov with any types of complaints. And so, they're processing information regularly, daily, about the moratorium and that the...and about the rental...residential rent freeze.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Thank you for that. All right. Members, we've reached the mid-meeting mark for--and we'll take a ten-minute break? Is that okay? And we'll be...the WASSP Committee meeting of Monday, February 3rd, is in recess until 10:40. . . .(gavel). . .

**RECESS:** 10:31 a.m.

**RECONVENE:** 10:45 a.m.

CHAIR SINENCI: . . .(gavel). . . Aloha, and welcome back to the WASSP Committee meeting of Monday, February 3rd. It is 9:45 a.m. Mahalo, Members, for that bio break, and we will continue--great questions so far, but we will continue on with our second line of questioning. Three minutes each, and we'll, again, go back to Council...Committee Vice-Chair Johnson. Go ahead.

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Thank you, Chair. . . .(inaudible). . . this next question is either for Director Tsuhako or Deputy Director Saumalu, but if anybody wants to jump in, feel free. But basically, I'm going to go back...back in time when former Councilmember Gladys Baisa was sitting in our seats, and much, you know, appreciation for her and her efforts. She created something called the Laulima fund, and some of the directors and deputy directors might know that, but basically, it was after 9/11, there was--our economy got hit real hard. It was \$10 million that was put in that fund for all kinds of

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things to help our community, with--with rent, with utilities, et cetera, et cetera. I'd like to hear the department's view on creating a fund like that, that's similar to a Laulima. Because that \$3 million rental assistance is small potatoes compared to the 10 million that was originally the Laulima fund. So, any of our department directors who would like to speak on that?

CHAIR SINENCI: Deputy Mataafa? I believe we lost Director Tsuhako to another meeting.

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay.

MR. MATAAFA: Thank you, Chair. And thank you, Councilmember Johnson, for the question. I'd have to go back and do some research on the Laulima fund. I do know that this Rental Assistance Program does stem out of the COVID era, when we did have CARES Act that put funding towards helping with rental assistance. And the rental assistance that was provided at DHH--through DHHC at the time, and now with the Department of Housing, is almost an offshoot of that, so it is \$3 million, like you notified. And I would have to do more research on that Laulima project...or Laulima Fund to understand a little bit more of the scope there, and to see if it may be something we could try to look at within the Department of Housing.

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Well, thank you, Deputy Director Mataafa. I went back and looked...pulled up the Budget and Finance Report back in 2001, and I'll just highlight a sentence here. It's as presently designed, the program would be implemented for three months, and will provide assistance to families in the areas of food and necessary personal items, housing, utility bills, and medicine. Ms. Baisa stated that partnering agencies with the experience in operating crisis assistance programs will be utilized to take applications and determine eligibility. All benefits would be paid directly to the vendors. Those items, the food, the utility bills, the medicine, we...we know that when folks are struggling to pay rent, they cut down on their food bills. So, they eat ramen noodles and less healthy food in order to pay their mortgage...or their rents. And we know that kūpuna, when they are struggling to pay their rents, they cut down on their medicine. So, instead of taking three pills, they take one pill. . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . And none of these solutions are healthy for our communities. So, this is, I think, a really important fund that would help in these trying times, and I wanted to--you know, right before budget, just to hear your mana'o, Deputy Director, if the...if the Administration would be amenable to something like that. My time's up, and I see you nodding your head. It sounds like you said you wanted more research, but I'm...I'm here for it. Let's talk, on or offline. I'm ready to move if that's what you guys would be considering on supporting.

MR. MATAAFA: And Chair, if I can respond just very briefly?

CHAIR SINENCI: Go ahead, Deputy.

MR. MATAAFA: Yeah. And thank you again for that...that insightful information, Councilmember Johnson. With the program that the Department of Housing runs, it is



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really geared more towards the rental-assistance side. But I do agree that maybe a larger conversation could be had with seeing the good takeaways from the Laulima program and seeing if it could be reimplemented with the collaboration of other departments that may be affected or could help implement that. Thank you.

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Thank you. Yeah, unfortunately, this is not our first rodeo in dealing with these shocks to our economy. But thank you so much. Thank you, Chair. No further questions.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Mahalo, Vice-Chair. Next, we have Member Cook, followed by Pro Tem Kama for your three minutes.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Thank you, Chair. I guess my question first is for Ms. Hocker, and then it'll be for our in...in-house people. I think statistics are going to be really important in sort of looking at...navigating this so that we can find out and put it into different categories...not necessarily for justification, but to sort it out so that people aren't--everybody isn't painted with this...with one brush because everybody else is in a different situation. Some people possibly aren't paying their rent as opportunity...as opportunistic, some people really lost their jobs. So, a variety of things. Health issues. So, is that something that your organization tracks, or could help in the--along the way, to provide data to break it down, so that the people have more identity?

CHAIR SINENCI: Ms. Hocker?

MS. HOCKER: Yes. So, I wish my principal researcher was here to answer that question. You know, one of the things that we try to do through our community...actually, I want to backtrack here. Because when we're talking data, a lot of people think numbers, and I've heard both Chair Lee and Councilmember U'u-Hodgins ask about numbers. It is definitely something that's on our plate. We were focusing in this time, since really, October 2023, on how to legitimize community voices and experiences as data points. But, you know, it's safe to say--and we can get this all together. If this body is saying, hey, we want really concrete numbers, we want to deep dive into the data, then I believe that that's something we can do. I will say that, you know, 50 percent of area median income is a...is about \$55,000 a year. And I think we all know basically anybody who's, I can say safely at 50 percent area median income, is at huge risk of becoming unhoused. And I think that's--we should look at this issue. The bottom line here is being unhoused, and we know that people are subjected to terrible circumstances. Their health plummets, both mental and physical, and that's what we want to avoid, right, is more people ending up on the streets. We know that the wages have not raised in any significant way, even with minimum wage being increased, that puts people in a...in a financially stable environment. And so, we have two classifications of renters that I think this body should know about, which is rent-burdened and then severely rent-burdened. So, anything over 30 percent of income is considered rent-burdened if you're paying that towards your rent, 30 percent. But then once you get into the 50 percent category, which I would say the market rate, as it's been increased over the last year and a half, is up there, you know, we look at functionally that becoming an

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additional weight on people. So, it's...it's with us. You know, really, the County of Maui poses a bit of an issue with collecting the data because unless a landlord registers for long-term rental exemption, or is actively paying their taxes to the state, there really is no record of who's providing housing and who isn't. We don't track landlords. We don't track people who do business in that way. And according to the Office of Consumer Protection, tenants are consumers, so we're not tracking them either. So, when it comes to getting the data, it's really...it...it is a huge hodgepodge . . . *(timer sounds)*. . . and we'll do our best to get those numbers.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Okay. Thank you.

MS. HOCKER: Sorry I took up --

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: My time's up.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay.

MS. HOCKER: Great question.

CHAIR SINENCI: Yeah. Mahalo, Member Cook. Next, we have Pro Tem Kama, followed by Chair Lee.

COUNCILMEMBER KAMA: Thank you, Chair. So, I wanted to get back to Mediation Services. So, you mentioned earlier that the languages that all the information is being interpreted is seven. Is that the...the maximum languages? Because I know that we have 11 for DMV in terms of drivers.

MS. BOWERS: Not at all.

COUNCILMEMBER KAMA: Okay.

MS. BOWERS: We are still expanding these --

COUNCILMEMBER KAMA: Okay.

MS. BOWERS: -- one pagers because we want everyone to have access to all the same information.

COUNCILMEMBER KAMA: Right.

MS. BOWERS: So, our challenge was just finding the correct service.

COUNCILMEMBER KAMA: Okay. Is...how long do you think that's going to take?

MS. BOWERS: We should be able to get this wrapped up within this week.

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COUNCILMEMBER KAMA: Okay. Great. And then earlier, you also mentioned that there are pockets of communities, I think, you were talking about that you were having a hard time reaching, or are not able to reach, or not sure where they are.

MS. BOWERS: When I was referring to the pockets, I'm talking mostly about those who have emigrated here from other areas, and also, that's combined with the English language being another barrier for them.

COUNCILMEMBER KAMA: Okay.

MS. BOWERS: So, we have insulated communities that --

COUNCILMEMBER KAMA: Yeah.

MS. BOWERS: -- really trust their own. We need to be able to reach those communities that don't really participate in public forums the same way that others do.

COUNCILMEMBER KAMA: Do you know who those pockets are?

MS. BOWERS: I would...identify just off the top of my head, a lot of the Marshallese community here.

COUNCILMEMBER KAMA: Okay. Yeah.

MS. BOWERS: Some of the Tongan community as well.

COUNCILMEMBER KAMA: Yeah. Yeah.

MS. BOWERS: It's just those that are more...more insulated and circular than coming out to meetings and testifying --

COUNCILMEMBER KAMA: Yeah.

MS. BOWERS: -- like this. Those --

COUNCILMEMBER KAMA: Yeah.

MS. BOWERS: -- lower incomes, those that are too busy working three jobs to really know what's going on or have access to resources. So, when I say pockets --

COUNCILMEMBER KAMA: Yeah.

MS. BOWERS: -- those are the types of pockets I'm --

COUNCILMEMBER KAMA: Yeah.

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MS. BOWERS: -- talking about.

COUNCILMEMBER KAMA: Okay. Okay. Okay. Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Pro Tem Kama. Next, we have Chair Lee, followed by Member Paltin.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Thank you, Chair. Ms. Bowers, where do you get most of your funding from?

MS. BOWERS: Councilwoman Lee, we get most of our funding from the judiciary. They provide approximately 40 percent. Now, we are...that's almost rivaled by what we receive from the county. We'd got a substantial increase. Thank you for that. But the majority is coming from grants and other fundraising efforts. Our fees for service --

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay. So, the...so, the question is...the question is, is it enough? What you're receiving, is it enough, and do you have the capacity to handle hundreds of more clients?

MS. BOWERS: To answer the first question, it is not enough. The way that we are able to cover the proposed Act 202 cases is the Legislature provided \$410,000, period. That is for administrative cost, including the contracted mediators. And that is how we are preparing for the flood of cases. So, we have mediators that are going to be compensated that can do at least five mediations a day per contractor, and we have contracted mediators on standby. So, at this time, I am not worried that we will not be able to meet the need regarding the mediations. Again, the challenge is going to be getting the tenants to respond within the 15 days, no later than the 30 days. Because if they don't, that is going to protract the entire timeline for this process.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay. And then my other question is for Ms. Hocker. Jordan, does...is it kind of a burden that's being put on you by us by asking for stats?

MS. HOCKER: Well, you know, I always like to say, Chair Lee, that there's plenty of work to do. And so, you know, the numbers one is something that we keep getting...we keep getting asked. It's definitely on our radar. Our advocacy director has raised her hands, and she is here. I believe a majority of our --

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay.

MS. HOCKER: -- crew is here.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Well, thank you. Jordan, the reason why I raise this issue is because it's important to us. Because we need a justification for the monies that we allocate. But in addition to that, in addition to that, two things. One, we don't want to create ano...an extraordinary burden on you who are trying to advocate, you know, and trying to help with services. So, if we can help in that regard, extracting or obtaining numbers, let us know. We'll figure something else out. The other thing is, we just want to make

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sure--you know, we...we appreciate all the work that you guys do, and we just...as we prepare for our new budget, you wouldn't believe how much competition there is for the same pot of money. So...so we . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . have to be...we have to think ahead and try and figure out how we're going to perform this miracle. Thank you.

MS. HOCKER: I hear what you're saying. Thank you for your questions and comments.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Chair Lee. Next, we have Member Paltin, if she's on. Member Paltin?

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: My first question is for Ms. Bowers. Have you been able to get in touch with Roots Reborn and Kaibigan ng Lahaina as to those pockets of folks? Can you guys hear me okay?

MS. BOWERS: Okay. No, Councilwoman, I can hear you. I was just unmuting myself. I have the phone numbers, and thank you again for providing them. We were first looking at providing the translation services, which we were able to get from the Governor's Office. But I have my staffer that's newly hired reaching out to the persons whose names you gave me in order to reach the pockets that I was referring to, and for any other suggestions for community groups or organizations that we need to make ourselves available to. But again, thank you for --

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Okay.

MS. BOWERS: -- that much-valued information.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Great. Great. And then my next question is to anybody who's able to answer. And sorry for coming back from recess late. But all the financial resources are...that are available to folks--rental assistance, whatever, homeowner assistance--is there a centralized place for those resources that could be easily distributed media blitz as well? Because--you know, and...and not just the resources, but the guidelines that people need like, you know, some people--this rental assistance is only for fire survivors, this rental assistance is for everyone, this rental assistance is for whatever, U.S. citizens or something. Is there a centralized place to point people to that would have that information in one place?

CHAIR SINENCI: Is that for Director Hartsock?

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Sure, if she has the answer.

MS. HARTSOCK: We were having those resources posted on Maui Mediation Services' website under their resources tab. Bevanne--I...I...I'll look right now. Bevanne, did you want to speak to that?

MS. BOWERS: We are still looking for resource during our weekly conversations that we've been having with the Governor's Office and with the judiciary. I believe that we are still missing some resources, and we have had others that were brought to our attention,

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but some of the resources that we're finding that people are saying have monies, when we follow up with a phone call, they say that the monies are either running low, or they're not accepting anyone else. So, I think it would be of great benefit. And we would like to be a clearinghouse, I just don't know if we are missing some of the resources that are indeed out there. But what we have gotten from the Governor's Office, we have indeed included it. And if anyone hearing this call has or is aware of other resources that are applicable to this program, please contact us so we can provide that information. . . .*(timer sounds)*. . .

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you. And then I just was wondering if the County--because Saumalu said there still was some available--if...if all of that can be aggregated. And especially if you, when you follow up, they give different information, if that can be posted or followed up on as well. I think it's real important for us as agencies or the counties to...to be able to help do that legwork for folks that are desperately searching for that financial resources. Thank you.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Member Paltin, for that. We will follow up with that. Next, we have Member Rawlins-Fernandez, followed by Member Sugimura.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo, Chair. So, I...I heard loud and clear from Ms. Bowers that the problem is getting...will be getting tenants to respond with...within the 15 days. So, hearing that very clearly, is there--does anyone know of a...of a plan to try to address that problem specifically, and does that plan need more resources? For whoever wants to speak to it.

MS. BOWERS: Just as a follow up, Councilwoman, I would say any and all access to any media would be greatly appreciated. We were not allowed to spend any of the money that was provided from the judiciary on marketing, on branding, and that's what's needed. If tenants don't know, they won't access the help that we want so desperately to provide them. So, resources that would cover the expenses of marketing, branding, publicizing, whatever label you want to put on it, would be greatly appreciated because the last time that we did this, which was after COVID and Act 57, Maui Mediation Services spent approximately \$10,000 just with one marketing outlet, which was radio stations. So, the prices are exorbitant.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: As former candidates, we...we understand how much the...the cost is for getting the word out about things--advertising, all...et cetera, et cetera. Director Hartsock, do you know of any resources that Maui Mediation Services could access to help to defray that cost or cover that cost?

MS. HARTSOCK: We access...so, we...the Governor's Office is, I believe, able to do more media. We could do more media on this, especially on the announcement of this. I do know of some financial supports that are available for survivors, and those who were not directly impacted, so I can share --

CHAIR SINENCI: Tia, we...we can't hear you. If you can...yeah, just speak louder.

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MS. HARTSOCK: Oh.

CHAIR SINENCI: Yeah. For some reason, your volume went soft.

MS. HARTSOCK: Oh, shoot. Sorry. Can you hear me now better? So, we...we do have some...we can...Governor's Office, we will be able to--I've been talking to comms office this whole time--so, we will try and push some more stuff out as well, and I can work with Bevanne on that. We've been working very closely with Bevanne and her team, so we can work on trying to find some--either assistance, or trying to push our channels that we have access to from the Governor's Office. I--we also have some financial support . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . that we have found that is available, so I can make sure that they have those resources for their website again.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo.

MS. HARTSOCK: There have been some extensions...there's been some extensions in the time for the Hawai'i Interim Housing Program in the...on the date from the DBEDT Department, Department of Economic...Business and Economics.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo, Director. Chair, may I ask if Deputy Director Mataafa would be able to speak to that as well?

CHAIR SINENCI: Deputy? Did he get the question as far as --

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Resources to help get the word out so that tenants will know to respond within the 15 days.

CHAIR SINENCI: Deputy Mataafa?

MR. MATAAFA: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Councilmember Rawlins-Fernandez. As far as resources go to pay for that, I don't think the department currently has funding to pay for that. We do have a platform on the Department of Housing website that we could potentially use, but I'd have to take a look into that to see if that might...that would be the best way to get information out.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo, Deputy Director. Mahalo, Chair.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Member Rawlins-Fernandez. Next, we have Member Sugimura, followed by Member U'u-Hodgins.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Thank you. I think that, just from other meetings, there's like housing advocate that was basically collecting data right after...I don't know if it was COVID. I'm going to look for that person's name. And I...I remember he did great data collection. I...I'll get you the name. That might...might bring us, you know, closer to some of the questions about numbers. I got reintroduced to him by a meeting with

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Roots Reborn, and so may...maybe, you know, we can have some of those questions--or the data that we're all asking for. I...I do know that when COVID hit, Bevanne Bowers and Maui Mediation was very much involved in...in helping with the same problem. And you went on radio. I did hear you recently on the radio, but I believe that we do need to have more of it. So, is the target date...what...what is the target date, February...that we should...

MS. BOWERS: February 5th is the --

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Right.

MS. BOWERS: -- start of the process, but we will still need ongoing messaging for people to understand. Because remember, it's going to be in tiers.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Um-hum.

MS. BOWERS: So, you have to be four months or more behind, and then three months --

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Three months.

MS. BOWERS: -- and so on. But we're going to still have to get that message out repeatedly for people to fully understand what we're doing and where to go.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Yeah. So, it sounds like Governor's Office has communications--their...their comms team and others--but we should...we should really do that. Because although we have Chelsea Davis with us today, which is going to be huge because she does such good media coverage, you know, we need to keep the...the fire going.

MS. BOWERS: And we appreciate any and all exposure we're able to get.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Okay. So, we'll work on it. So, I have no further questions, Chair. Thank you very much for bringing this forward.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Member Sugimura. Next, we have Member U'u-Hodgins.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Thank you. I just have one more question, and please use the rest of my time to say whatever you feel like you might need to say that we haven't discussed. But I'm wondering...I'm wondering if you can tell me the goal of mediation. Is it to come up with a payment plan, is it rent forgiveness? Typically, what...what are we looking at with the goals for this mediation program that you guys are going to provide? And thank you for that, by the way.

MS. BOWERS: Thank you for the question, Councilwoman. We are looking for all of the above.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Okay.



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MS. BOWERS: Everyone is not going to be able to reach an agreement where the tenant remains where they are. We know that.

COUNCILMEMBER U‘U-HODGINS: Okay.

MS. BOWERS: But if we can provide a forum for there to be respectful, civil, open dialogue, that will go a long way, and could be the difference between someone maintaining the residence or a residence being, quite frankly, torn up --

COUNCILMEMBER U‘U-HODGINS: Um-hum.

MS. BOWERS: -- by a disgruntled tenant --

COUNCILMEMBER U‘U-HODGINS: Um-hum.

MS. BOWERS: -- when something could have happened when there was just meaningful conversation. We have all been traumatized, directly or indirectly, over the events of the last--well, since August 8th. And so, right now, we're just trying to bring people together to find their own best solutions. So, we don't go in with an agenda. It's what the two parties are willing to agree to. Because if they're not willing to agree to it, they're not going to honor it, and it won't mean anything.

COUNCILMEMBER U‘U-HODGINS: Okay. Thank you. And since all press is good press sometimes, you do have media right here. And please use the rest of my time to say whatever you need to say, and hopefully, she'll air it on your behalf.

MS. BOWERS: Well, what I'd like to say, first of all, is thank you very much, Chairman, for the opportunity for us to give more information about this process. We are trying to make it as easy to understand for everyone, and if there are any questions, we have dedicated phone lines and email just so we can reach out to everyone. The main thing I want people to know is, time is crucial. Fifteen days. We need to get the process started. We are ready and willing and able to conduct the mediations, but we need the word to get out and we need both parties to respond. Thank you.

CHAIR SINENCI: Bevanne, what was that phone number and email address?

MS. VEILLEUX: There are two numbers...there are two numbers to reach for our landlord-tenant questions for that. The first one is (808) 344-4255, the second number is (808) 446-0511.

MS. BOWERS: And the email is landlordtenanthelp--all together--@mauimmediation.org.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Thank you for that information. My question was for Deputy Director Mataafa, and it...it sounds like the...that the Rental Assistance Program is very much different from the mediation side. So...so, how is the department either working, or

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reaching out, or getting the information from the mediation process? Because it sounds like those four agencies you mentioned--MEO, Women Helping Women, Ka Hale A Ke Ola--they have their own process that might not necessarily go through this mediation process. So, if we wanted some of that funding that is already allocated to go towards this more emergency type of...this mediation process, how do we get Maui Mediation to work with some of those agencies? Is the department going to be either having someone to monitor these proceedings? *(pause)* Oh, you're muted, Director...Deputy Director.

MR. MATAAFA: Sorry about that, Chair. So, the department's role here is...is...is indirect. So, our staff works directly with those four agencies. And the four agencies, as they intake applications, they assess the needs of the individual applicants. And they also are willing to do the work to reach out to Maui Mediation Services if, in their process of reviewing the application, they feel like it may need to be elevated to that level. So, the department's role here is more so aligned with making sure that we're able to get the funding out to the four agencies, and the four agencies will be working directly with Maui Mediation Services to help troubleshoot some of those applications that come in.

CHAIR SINENCI: And then it looks like some of the county agencies, they have their own criteria for taking some of--you know, one of the question was, were they fire survivors? Were they not affected by the fires, but still going? So, each of these agencies have different criteria for...for applicants to...to be approved?

MR. MATAAFA: So, generally the requirements--the main two ones is you have to have an income of 80 percent of the area median income and below, and then you also have to show that you're at risk of being evicted from your home. So, that can come in the form of a letter--an eviction letter or some type of notice--and that will trigger the applicant to move forward in the process when they work with those four different agencies. Those are generally the two bigger requirements that are a part of the Rental Assistance Program.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Thank you for that . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . Deputy Director. I just had one more question for Ms. Good [sic] of the Legal Aid Society of Hawai'i. How does this moratorium lift affect the Legal Aid Society of Hawai'i's clients?

MS. GOODS: Mahalo for your question, Chair. The moratorium has been in effect for many months, and so our clients...we've been helping clients throughout this whole time. Particularly, this portion of the moratorium that's lifting, the main thing that we've been working with is a little bit of confusion, misinformation, or just misunderstood information. A lot of that has to do with the language that's used to explain what's going on. At Legal Aid, we are sure to give a lot of counsel about what is happening, how the law works, and how the law affects you. And so, with the eviction moratorium, it's about explaining that it is not the same as an eviction proclamation, and that the proclamation itself has many parts to it. For example, it covers not just this island, but other islands as well. Within the proclamation, there is an eviction moratorium, and the eviction moratorium has many parts in and of itself. So, with preparing for and dealing with the...the moratorium prohibiting evictions for nonpayment of rent that ends--or that

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starts tomorrow, we have just been trying to get the word out, work with a lot of community partners to be consistent in the language that we use. And we encourage everyone in...in all capacities to not use the term "eviction moratorium" as generally as...as it has been used, and to be more specific about what changes are happening. Act 202 is going to be in effect until next year, so there's plenty of time. But, you know, right up front, we want to inform as many people as we can as to what it is that's happening, and give them all of the opportunities that we can to prepare. The other part that affects our clients is, we do a lot of referrals. We, ourselves, don't work with rental assistance per se, but if we are aware of programs, we like to refer people to...towards those programs, but we need more information about them. I think it was already mentioned by Maui Housing Hui, the--a request for more information. For example, is...is the funding Act 202-specific funding? Is that...you know, is that part of the process? I appreciate the information that we've been given thus far, but that's another big concern that comes over the hotline for us. One other thing I'd just like to add is the media blast. I appreciate hearing everything about improving information that goes out to the media. Coconut wireless is a big friend of ours. We use it quite often. Sometimes there are glitches that happen, and that could lead us into situations where information is mixed up, but the major channels can be very helpful. Not just to say, hey, this is happening, but a lot of, you know, what Ms. Bowers is saying is, what do you do now? You call Maui Mediation Services. That's what you do. That's...it's a...15 days is not a lot of time. There's not anything necessarily in place to make sure that you got, you know, your notice correctly. That could happen later. There's a lot that goes into Act 202, a lot of different steps. It's tiered. It has all kinds of information. Even if you think you got a notice and the timing is off, call. That's main...the main way that we assist our clients. Thank you for the question, Chair.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Ms. Good [sic], for that information. Members, any need for a third round of questions? We...I do see a couple hands. Chair Lee, followed by Vice-Chair Johnson.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Yeah, this would be for Deputy Director Mataafa. So, I'm...obviously, there's a need for clarification of information. I mean, even I...I was confused until we got all of the discussion, you know, out there, and...and vetted, and clarified. So, if people call the Housing department, are you going to appoint someone who can address these issues? Because, you know, a likely place to call would be the Housing department. Could you do that?

MR. MATAAFA: Thank you for the question, Chair Lee. Can you clarify like what type of information on these calls? If it's relating to the Rental Assistance Program, we have staff that can take those calls and give information about that. If it's about the mediation pieces, I think it might be better suited to have them call Maui Mediation Services --

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Yeah. So --

MR. MATAAFA: -- to get that type of information.

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COUNCILMEMBER LEE: And so, if the person answering the phone at Housing could just say that, refer that person to Ms. Bowers or to the correct agency, that would be very helpful. And...and for the time being, you know, I'm...I'm not trying to be critical, but--because most departments do this--could you have a live voice answer the phone? Because it...it's hard to...to deal with a recording. And so, for the time being, because this is an emergency, and people are scared and confused, if...if you don't mind, having somebody answer the phone instead of just get a recording.

MR. MATAAFA: We can --

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay. Thank you.

MR. MATAAFA: We can look into that. Thank you, Chair.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay. Thank you.

CHAIR SINENCI: Thank you, Chair Lee. Next, we have Vice-Chair Johnson.

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Thank you, Chair. And I support those considerations by Chair Lee. This question, I thought would be for Deputy Director Mataafa, but then I realized we have a lot of people here that might be better to answer this question, so if anybody wants to. But it's really in regards to the HUD guidelines for rentals, as well as how that interacts with the housing--or the...the rental increase fees...freeze. You know, when I was living in low-income housing, LIHTC, whenever I would get a raise from the company, the next day they would call me and say, okay, now we're going to raise your rent because it's based off your income. So, I wonder how that affects now people who are living in, say, Catholic Charities property, or some property that is a 80 percent AMI and below, and someone within there gets a raise at this period--go from 50,000 to 52,000, I don't know, just for an example--the...how does that work as far as the...if there's a freeze going on from...that's one thing I'd kind of see if there's a pickle there. If anybody wants to address it, I'm really curious how that works. *(pause)* Well, maybe, Chair, if we could get that question in writing and maybe send it to...maybe HUD? I don't know. I'm curious to how that works. So, if we don't...if that's something that we have to consider, I'd...I'd like this body to consider it. Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR SINENCI: Thanks, Vice-Chair Johnson. Member Rawlins-Fernandez.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo, Chair. And mahalo to all of our resources for being with us today, and answering all of our questions, and for serving the community. So, my question is...is a clarifying question for Deputy Director Mataafa, and it's regarding some of the numbers that he provided earlier regarding the amount of money for rental assistance. So, I'm going to repeat it, and then you correct if I wrote it down incorrectly anywhere. So, 3 million was appropriated, 2.7 was encumbered, and 2.4 million was spent?

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MR. MATAAFA: Thank you, Councilmember, for that question. To date, we have 2.2...a little over 2.2 million spent out of the four programs. And then if it's helpful to kind of think about the hard--so, one of the things that kind of came up earlier in the discussion was how many more we may be able to serve? And the reason why that's hard to kind of quantify is because through each program, the types of assistance that goes out to applicants is a little bit different. But to date, across all four programs, we've helped--through those programs, those four agencies--almost 250 households to date. If that's helpful in your considerations moving forward.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: So, is any of that unspent, the 800,000? Well...well, actually, I guess 300,000 was not encumbered by one of the four agencies, so 300,000. Can that put...like some of that be used for some of the education, advertising, promotion, you know, just the outreach for the four agencies and for Maui Mediation?

MR. MATAAFA: Thank you, Councilmember, for the question. I'd have to go back and take a deeper look at the grant agreement that was set up, but right now, it is really an operational fund. We do give a little bit of admin funds to each of those agencies. I would just have to go back and double check and look deeper at the grant agreements to see if marketing is included in that...and if so, maybe I will look to do something with the marketing piece. And then you had one more question there. Sorry, I...I forgot what the other question was.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Oh, the 300,000 is...was unencumbered, and so it didn't go to any of the four agencies. Would Maui Mediation be able to access that funds to help get the word out about the service?

MR. MATAAFA: So, for...so, the--all four agencies have encumbered funds, so what we do is we don't encumber the whole \$3 million at the start of the fiscal year. We encumber about two-thirds of it, and then when we get to about this point, January, February, March, we look at what the outstanding need still is between all four programs, and then we adjust the...the funding through a grant amendment . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . to each of those agencies depending if one has more need than the others. So, all four agencies have encumbered a contract or a grant agreement with the department, but it doesn't go out...the whole amount doesn't go out at the outset of the fiscal year. We...we wait until about this time in the year to kind of assess where everybody's at, and where their drawdowns are, and then we make grant amendments to see...to give them additional funding if it's required.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo, Deputy. Well, if we're hearing that the specific need is getting the word out and outreach, then I'm hoping that our departments would help to provide funding for that specific need that was stated to us today.

MR. MATAAFA: Thank you, Councilmember. And yeah, I think that the biggest need is on the...on the program side, actually. There...there--like many mentioned here today, there is a lack of inventory. We do have some that are really in need of the rental

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assistance. I mean, a lot of them are in need of the rental assistance. And then I'll go and double check to make sure if we can use the marketing...if we can look at the admin funds that are allocated to each of those agencies and see if there's some wiggle room there in making an access between Maui Mediation Services. But they've all committed to making sure that when these applicants come in, if it's necessary, that they are linked up with Maui Mediation Services.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo, Deputy Director, and mahalo, Chair. And I just wanted to reiterate...and we...because we all know this, that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of...of cure. And so, if we can spend a little bit more on marketing to get the word out, then perhaps we...we won't have to spend even more on services when folks lose their housing. And so, I just...I...I really want us to, you know, like provide investment at the front end, where the cost will be less, than waiting until the damage is done on the back end, and having to spend even more money. Mahalo, Chair.

CHAIR SINENCI: Good point, Member Rawlins-Fernandez, and thank you for that. Pro Tem Kama.

COUNCILMEMBER KAMA: Thank you, Chair. So, my question is for Maui Mediation. So, my understanding is that we have 15 days to try to do a media blitz to be able to get the word out as far-reaching as potentially possible. And some of that reach is going to have to include those pockets that you had talked about, right? So, do you have any idea what it would cost to do a media blitz over the next 15 days?

MS. BOWERS: Councilwoman, I would have to contact the various media agencies to find out if they would A, give us a discounted rate because this is for the betterment of our community. But I would still need to contact their sales departments to find out just what their rates are for various spots, times, or ads.

COUNCILMEMBER KAMA: Um-hum. Um-hum. I only ask because as...I...I see the urgency, but then I also see that for a state entity or a county entity to do anything, it takes time. And we're looking at 15 days, we're not looking at a month, or two, or four weeks, right? So, I'm just trying to figure out what you need, and who can get it to you soon. Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Pro Tem Kama. Did I...did I see Member Paltin? Go ahead.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you, Chair. I just...this is more of like a forward-looking thing. Because there was an eviction moratorium through COVID too, I believe, and it feels like right now, we're...we're really pushing up against February 5th. And so, I just was wondering...like hopefully, there's not future disasters, but is the state, or the county Housing, and all the...the agencies creating like a checklist of things to do? Like, you know, being very clear on the wording, and lining up the translations, and like that? Because February 5th is Wednesday, and like, you know, media attention and all of that, it feels like we're...we're pushing up with our backs against the...the...the deadline.

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And I mean, the Governor must have known in advance of when he was going to end the eviction moratorium. Like...I feel like we should have had more time to...to line up all these resources, to line up the financial resources in one central place. I know we're...it feels like we're...we're putting it on nonprofit agencies, were putting it on community groups, but...but the Governor himself controlled the timeline. This is the second end of an eviction moratorium in like less than five years. So, I...I feel like, you know, if there is another ending to something, we should be more prepared with like some sort of checklist, or...or, you know, like get on the media blitz right away, get on the translations right away, be more clear, and...and have these partner agencies that are helping with us like in from day one when...when the eviction moratorium is going to end, that here are the steps that we should...we should take to ensure that--you know, how many cases are in the judiciary right now? Has the Attorney General been able to send them all letters, and...and things like that? It's just...you know, if...if...if we're doing it, this isn't our first rodeo, but it feels like it is. That's...that's all. I don't know if anyone has an answer to it.

COUNCILMEMBER KAMA: Last one.

MS. HARTSOCK: I...I can try and kind of speak to that if...

COUNCILMEMBER KAMA: Okay.

MS. HARTSOCK: If that's okay.

CHAIR SINENCI: Go ahead, Director.

MS. HARTSOCK: Okay. Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Councilmember Paltin. We...I agree. We...we tried as much as we could. We--Governor pushed back the date three times because we wanted to make sure that we had the most amount of lead time. So, thankfully, we got it pushed back three different times . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . specifically to go past the holiday season to make sure that that would not disrupt. So, there's been a lot of conversa...many conversations with calls that we've received from both sides, from tenants and landlords, specifically property managers, looking to say how this is impacting in many different ways on both ends, right? And so, with that information, we tried to time it as best as we could to make sure that--we had been meet...we've been meeting with Maui Mediation Services, and the judiciary, and Legal Aid, I think, since October, think--knowing that this would be coming and trying to line up all the resources to make sure--specifically, as you know, we're trying to make sure that the mental health resources that--are in place. So, we've been working with the Housing folks here in Governor's Office to make sure that we have as much information as possible, we--to do the press releases, to get the FAQs. There's an FAQ posted on Governor's website under the news...under the...the press releases under...under the Newsroom from January 3rd. And so, that information was specifically going out on January 3rd. So, again, there is obviously more...and it's good...good to know what type of checklist should be in place, and...and so--from that previous Administration, we didn't get information on...on the checklist that was done, if there was a checklist done

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for the COVID situation. However, we have been taking diligent notes, learning from this situation, trying to get everything as much in place as possible. So, I appreciate the concern because this is the exact same concern that we've had this whole time. And...and I just wanted to mahalo Bevanne and her team at Maui Mediation Services, and Legal Aid, and the judiciary because this has been months now, months of trying to get things in place. And we can do better, so...I...I know we can do better, and so we will...we will try to continue making sure that this information gets out as much as possible. So, thank you.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you. If Ms. Hocker wanted to respond. I just seen her camera come on.

CHAIR SINENCI: Ms. Hocker?

MS. HOCKER: Yeah, I'll just...I'll just speak real quickly. You know, we have been trying to get the word out about this for--I'd say we've had graphics out on Instagram for about a month where we worked with the Governor's Office. I do know that the Governor's Office did push it back. And, you know, Maui Housing Hui is in agreeance with you. It...if this is--we need a game plan for all Administrations to follow. We...we do need something like that. Because our...our big concern is, you know, a month ago, if rental assistance had been made available, then we could really like get ahead...get ahead of this. And so, we...you know, we share that same sentiment, and also, you know, have been working with Director Hartsock on...on making sure the information is accurate, that it's timely, and...and doing what we have. And I will say that as our communications outreach, I have sent the graphics that we worked on with the Governor's Office to all of you Councilmembers' social media accounts that I could find, if you're interested in putting that information out on your own platforms or reach about Act 202. But yeah, we--you know, it's all hands on deck, and I--we...we share the same sentiment.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Jordan.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: I was wondering if the Governor would do a press conference, you know, about maybe...you know, the...the day before or something, about the ending of the eviction moratorium. Because, you know, lots of people tune in like when he does that, so--and...and if by then we have all the information in one spot, or can point to it, I think that would be helpful as well.

MS. HARTSOCK: We just...I just texted them about an hour ago . . . *(laughing)*. . . to see if we could do another...to see if we could get something pushed out again. We did, at the beginning of January. I think you're right, we need to do another one, and so, I will...I will make sure that my...that that's suggested. I'll...I'll...I suggested that to them, so I'll try and make sure that that's done. Thank you.



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COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you so much.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Mahalo, Member Paltin. Pro Tem Kama, did you have a--oh, she did answer your question? Any other questions, Members, for our resources? If not, if any of our resources wanted to provide some closing remarks that you didn't share earlier in the meeting, we'll give you some time. Go ahead, Director Hartsock.

MS. HARTSOCK: I will say, we recently did a large quality-of-life survey across the state, and some of the feedback that we received around disaster preparedness and communications--from all over the state, but we specifically looked at Maui responses in that survey--are...those...those...that content's available online. So, people can look at those dashboards, and look at the disaster communications, and the disaster response, and they can sort by county. It's at health-study.com. Health-study.com. And the dashboards are live, and so, they can...they can filter through county and look at Maui County's specific information around disaster preparedness and communications. And one of the things that we found was a lot of information is shared through social media. And so, we push it out on our social media, but I would strongly encourage folks on this call to push out those infographics that Haui...Maui Housing Hui developed, and that we posted on our...on Gov's website. We're going to post it again tomorrow. If you could please repost it on your social media because not every--as much as we do on media, even on the press releases and--people don't get . . . *(laughing)* . . . the...the information is that they're not getting a lot of that information on media, it's on social media. So, if people could please repost, that would be amazing. That's where a lot of folks are getting their information, on...on social media, and that's what we found on the...on the results of our survey as well. So, thank you so much for...for all of these awesome questions, and we're just honored to be here to be able to provide as much support and response in the most appropriate...respond in the most appropriate ways for you folks because our biggest concern is the mental health of the community. And so, as much as we can do, please do not hesitate to reach out.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Director Hartsock. And Jordan, yeah, if you could email those...those email blasts to...to WASSP Committee, then we can go ahead and include it in...on Granicus as well, in case people want to find it --

MS. HOCKER: Okay.

CHAIR SINENCI: -- on our Committee. Go ahead.

MS. HOCKER: And I do want to say, in terms of data, just to close, we do have a qualitative report. I would say we've been raising the issue of the FEMA Direct Lease Program inflating rents since October 2023. And in June of 2023, we released a report that was based off of a community survey, but allowed people to use their voice and their experiences, and then we codified their stories into common themes. We tend to do this, and I do want to send that around to the WASSP Committee Members so that you have a clear picture of what we unearthed as the...the common demographic. We had not only tenants on that, but as well as homeowners. You know, I will say in terms of data,

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there are so many reports out there. The ALICE Report from Hawai'i Community Foundation and Maui United Way just came out, and that's a really...that's a good data dive, and shows specific Maui circumstances on our housing issue. So, we'd be happy to send both the report that we did and the 2024 report of ALICE homes. Because when we're talking about the group of people that we're focusing on at Maui Housing Hui, and that are the most housing insecure or vulnerable, you're looking at asset-limited, income-constrained homes. And so, I can send that over in one...in one batch. We do tend to work in community voices because...I understand the push for numbers, numbers, numbers, but these are people's lives, and I think those stories are really relevant. And so, we'll...we'll send that over, but thank you for that question.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Ms. Hocker. Ms. Bowers, did you have any closing comments from your staff?

MS. BOWERS: Committee Chair, I would like to thank the entire Committee, all Councilmembers who have really just shown all of us here how you feel this is such an important...important date that is coming up and how it is just crucial that people understand. I would also like to acknowledge and congratulate all of our community partners because even though we're dealing with tragedies, this has brought so many organizations in this community together to support one another, and to share information and resources. So, for Jordan on the call...for U'i, who is here with us...we're doing this collectively, and it's taking the village. Continue...continue to support. I am grateful for what you've already said to us today, and the promises that you're making for going ahead in the future and helping our community know just what it is we're dealing with, and more importantly, how they can receive the assistance they need. Thank you so much for your time.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Ms. Bowers. Okay. Staff, is there anything else--do we need to consider before adjourning this meeting today?

MS. MACDONALD: Nothing other than your recommendation, Chair.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Members, thank you for this great discussion, and all your questions and comments today. With that, we'll...if there are no objections, I'll defer this item, Members.

COUNCILMEMBERS: No objections.

**COUNCILMEMBERS VOICED NO OBJECTIONS.**

**ACTION: DEFER pending further discussion.**

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Okay. Thank you. With that, we wanted to thank our panelists today for the great information. Mahalo for coming and explaining this to us. We've...we're going to follow up...Staff will follow up on the judiciary numbers. The AG's Office, mahalo for everyone for providing some very important testimony. The AG's letter. Also,

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mahalo to Chelsea for...for helping getting the word out. So, thank you for being here on all your media outlets. Members, with that, the time is 11:46, and the WASSP Committee of Monday, February 3rd--oh, go ahead.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: To...just to add to what you were saying in closing, this afternoon--I think Bevanne Bowers mentioned it--at 3:30 at MEO, they're having a...they're calling it community outreach regarding this eviction moratorium. So, if people who are listening to this, who want to come and ask questions, there'll be resources there. What time does it end? Maybe Jordan might know also.

MS. BOWERS: 6:00.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: 6:00?

MS. BOWERS: Yes.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: So 3:30 to 6:00 at MEO.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Mahalo.

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Continuation.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Member Sugimura --

COUNCILMEMBER SUGIMURA: Thank you.

CHAIR SINENCI: -- for that important reminder. And we also have an afternoon meeting here in the Chambers in the WAI Committee. Please join us at 1:30 p.m. With that, the WASSP Committee meeting of Monday, February 3rd is now adjourned. Thank you.  
...*(gavel)*...

**ADJOURN:** 11:46 a.m.

wassp:min:250203:crp

Transcribed by: Logan Tsuji

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CERTIFICATION

I, Logan Tsuji, hereby certify that pages 1 through 51 of the foregoing represents, to the best of my ability, a true and correct transcript of the proceedings. I further certify that I am not in any way concerned with the cause.

DATED the 10th day of March 2025, in Wailuku, Hawai'i

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Logan Tsuji', is written above a horizontal line.

Logan Tsuji