

EDB Committee

From: Tom Blackburn-Rodriguez <tominmaui@icloud.com>
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To: EDB Committee
Subject: Tom Blackburn-Rodriguez June 4, 2020 Testimony before EDB Committee

Tom Blackburn-Rodriguez

Testimony Before Economic Development and Budget Committee

Thursday, June 4, 2020

Good morning Chair Fernandez-Rawlins and committee members.

My name is Tom Blackburn-Rodriguez, I live in Kihei and I am testifying today as an individual.

I am testifying on EDB-85, "Legislation and Discussion on the Effect of the Coronavirus Pandemic, Rules, Cares Act and Related Issues."

My comments are these:

We are looking at a Human Services Tsunami heading towards Maui that will strain our non-profit human service providers even more than what they are now currently experiencing.

The elements of this pending disaster are:

(1) a breakdown in the Hawaii State Unemployment system that despite their best efforts, continues to have hundreds and hundreds of Maui households in the dark about the status of their unemployment applications and when they can be paid. Many have been waiting for 8 weeks or more for an answer and they are out of money. Why this is happening is a question Governor Ige continues to duck.

(2) The Pandemic unemployment of \$600 per week is due to end on July 25, immediately cutting any unemployment benefits to \$263 per week from the current \$863 per week.

(3) Federal authority to prevent rent evictions in the CARES act ends July 26. Landlords have already begun to prepare their eviction notices.

(4) Rules set to go into effect by the Trump administration will cut at least 775,000 people off of the EBT food stamp program unless they can find at least 20 hours of work per week. This when the Hawaii unemployment rate is at 37%, when factored against the number of unemployment claims filed.

I urge you to seriously consider these four elements as you review, appropriate and direct emergency services to help with rent, utility assistance and additional needs.

All of the elements mentioned will place a huge burden on county funded services and we must be prepared. I encourage you to continue to add funding to our front-line non-profit agencies.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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