

Great Committee

From: County Clerk
Sent: Wednesday, August 23, 2023 12:54 PM
To: Great Committee
Subject: FW: Resolution 23-194 Written Testimony
Attachments: Resolution 23194 Written Testimony.pdf

From: Mahea <heavenlymahea@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 23, 2023 12:14 PM
To: County Clerk <County.Clerk@mauicounty.us>
Subject: Resolution 23-194 Written Testimony

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Aloha Maui County Council,

I am submitting written testimony for Resolution 23-194.

Mahalo very much!
Mahea Bernal
Phone: 808.352.4042

Resolution 23-194

Testimony of Mahealani Bernal:

Aloha Council Chair Lee and Council Members,

I am testifying on behalf of my ohana who frantically fled the Lahaina fires on August 8, 2023. Within moments, the fires engulfed our ohana homes at Kelaweia Mauka that were lovingly built by our Papa many years ago on the aina of our kupuna. These homes became a meaningful foundation for our ohana's shared values, beliefs, and sense of purpose – it was a place for us to grow together, nurture and care for each other, raise our keiki, and serve as a launching pad for each of us to pursue our goals and dreams, whether it was at Lahaina or elsewhere. The effects of this tragedy have caused significant emotional distress and has impacted our ohana so profoundly as we are beyond disbelief that our beloved homes and our beloved Lahaina has burned to the ground!

My ohana is displaced and it is emotionally challenging to shift our focus towards the future. As they attempt to move forward, it will take some time for them to regain the comfort, security, and safety they once knew. We are heartbroken and continue to shed many tears - as I work with our insurance companies to recover the damage and loss caused by the fires, the sadness in my heart lingers.

As Maui County Council members, we strongly express to you that the residents of Lahaina rightfully deserve leadership that is truthful, leadership that has courage to face challenges with integrity, and leadership that provides transparency in the planning and decision-making process. Lahaina residents also deserve leadership that will hold itself to ethical standards of responsibility and accountability. It's been written, "People trust leaders when those leaders exemplify the behavior, they want their followers to exercise..."

Moving forward, as you plan for recovery and resilience, we implore you as leaders to consider community involvement in creating a shared vision for Lahaina and viable strategic plans for the present. We urge you to find ways to collaborate and negotiate with Lahaina community members to achieve what is needed while also listening to what is wanted. Also, in the processes of evaluating and developing more effective safety and emergency policies and making decisions, please support the community's wants and needs. We also ask that the Maui County Council take a more aggressive proactive approach in better emergency planning and practice that will ensure the best possible outcomes for Lahaina residents and businesses in the future.

Mahalo nui loa e malama pono...E'O Lahaina, E'O Maui!

Mahealani Bernal

Honolulu