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Aloha Councilmembers,

Mahalo for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Courtney Cole, and I'm the Secretary of the Maui Wedding and Event Association. I'm also the owner of Maui Wedding Dress Pressing, Bridal Concierge Hawaii, and Hawai'i Flying Dress.

Normally, as the secretary, I'm hiding behind my computer taking notes—but today, I'm honored to be here speaking on behalf of our industry. I'd like to share a little about the kind of visitor we believe fits best with Maui's values and the future we want to build for tourism.

Wedding and event visitors are different from general tourists. They don't come to take—they come to celebrate. They're here with intention: to mark a major milestone, to connect with family, and to experience Maui with deep respect.

From both experience and data, we know that these guests spend more. They support a wide range of small local businesses—from florists and photographers to musicians, venues, and shuttle drivers. They book private activities, and more of their spending stays right here in our community.

But beyond just spending, they're thoughtful guests. They're more likely to respect local customs, seek out local-owned businesses, and participate in giving back. Many leave with a deeper understanding of Hawaiian culture and become lifelong advocates for Maui.

Our organization works closely with our kupuna to continue learning and growing. This work is ongoing—and it matters.

As Maui looks at how we want to shape the future of tourism, we believe wedding and event travel is a model of responsible, meaningful, and values-aligned tourism.

We're asking for your support to continue this work—through cultural collaboration and financial investment—so we can keep Maui a world-class destination for celebration, connection, and community.

Mahalo for your time and for the work you do to guide Maui's future.