PSLU Committee

Letter of support attached.

Aloha, Kalei

June 2, 2020

Maui County
Planning & Sustainable Land Use Committee
RE: PSLU-56 Kilohana Makai

Aloha,

I am in support of the proposed Kilohana Makai project in South, Maui. I have several friends who were fortunate to have had their names drawn in lotteries for workforce housing projects here on Maui. It was life changing for them and their families. At the same time, I have even more friends whose lottery numbers were not called. They are left hoping and praying that the future holds another workforce project so that their family too can turn their hard work into a home of their own. I would like to be clear about who these projects are intended for and why we need them.

From my observations, the Maui residents who qualify for these projects are the backbone of our community. Most of the residents of these neighborhoods are young families with both parents working full-time jobs. Within these communities you will find teachers, lifeguards, firemen, civil servants, and workers throughout the hospitality industry. They are an integral part of what makes Maui such a special place. They teach our children, watch over our families while at the beach, respond to emergencies and provide much of the services that enhance our day-to-day life.

I had the opportunity to attend a meeting on this proposed project and several thoughts came to mind regarding the testifiers in opposition. I would be curious to know how many of them have their primary residence on island and pay state income taxes. I am also curious if they have vacation rentals that could be used as housing for locals. Many of the reasons given in opposition were thinly veiled cover stories for your classic "not in my backyard scenario". There were suggestions of re-purposing dilapidated buildings or constructing workforce homes on the makai side of the highway far from the beach and services. I heard the phrase "property values" repeatedly. One testifier complained of traffic and having to wait for several moments to cross the street the multiple times per day that she walked from her home to the beach. Really?

There were sea level rise concerns and access questions that were not applicable to this location. For me, what sort of encapsulated the haves and have nots reality of this debate is during a break in testimony. I witnessed a large group of those in attendance against the project get into a Range Rover and head off for their lunch. Obviously, affluent people love Maui too, but the longtime residents should not be excluded or pushed out of the areas that the rich decided that they like and want to occupy. I am tired of people who claim to love Maui and the people of Maui, yet do not want them in close proximity to their homes. Enough of the mentality of "I've got mine".

They come here and say, "well that's not how we do it where I'm from", they send their kids to private schools so not to integrate with the actual community. With the new norm and more time on my hands, I find myself reaching out to old friends from my childhood. I find that many of my closest friends whose families have called Hawaii home for generations, some of us from pre-discovery, now live on the mainland. Many of them are successful small business owners contributing positively to a community

elsewhere. From my communications with them it is clear the majority wish they were back home in the islands.

Without affordable housing options we will continue the talent drain of the residents who are one of the reasons Maui is no ka 'oi. Please do the right thing for the people who voted for you, those who believe that you are for the "little guy", the guy who doesn't always have their voice heard. Workforce housing exemplifies the meaning of caring for others and helping those achieve the dream of owning a home in the community they help build and support.

Aloha,

Kalei Fisher