

EDB Committee

From: Keku D. <kdep87@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, September 10, 2020 5:14 PM
To: EDB Committee
Cc: Keani N. Rawlins; Kelly King; Tasha A. Kama
Subject: Written Testimony for CARES Funds
Attachments: Testimony for County Economic Development and Budget Meeting.pdf

Hello Economic Development and Budget Committee,

I am attaching my written testimony for the CARES funds.

Thank you for your time and for your support to our community!

Keku DePonte
U.S. Army Veteran

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September 10, 2020

Maui County Economic Development and Budget Committee

Testimony submitted via email to: edb.committee@mauicounty.us

Position: Use Federal Covid-19 Relief Funds to support Maui County families

Dear Committee Chair Keani N.W. Rawlins-Fernandez, Vice-Chair Kelly Takaya King, and Committee Members:

My name is Keku DePonte, and I am a Combat Veteran and registered voter who lives in Kahului, HI 96732. I am writing to you as a private citizen and my work as a Case Manager/Program Manager/Service Provider with the Ku`ina Program housed at the University of Hawai'i Maui College and Veteran advocate informs my testimony. In my work with case managing disadvantaged youth and assisting our Veteran community, I have seen first-hand the devastating effects of this pandemic in Maui County.

For example, I have three disabled youth Participants that is very limited to employment due to their respective disabilities. Academics is very difficult for them and most living wage jobs require a high school equivalency or post-secondary school credential, but because of the limited funding we were provided, I have to make the very difficult decision of deferring academic support services to another agency and await their confirmation of qualification (which could vary from 2 weeks to 6 months) to provide covered academic support services or having a Participant that has exited a rehabilitative center with no income, unemployed, no family support, no high school equivalency, no access to technology, become homeless and provide them financial assistance to tithe them while we work through the process of getting connected to our already full capacity shelters and not have a guarantee for immediate housing. This isn't fault to our shelters as they are tirelessly providing services to our homeless community, and it isn't the disabled individuals' fault for being disabled, it's because we have limited support service funding for needed services like housing, or immediate wrap around support for individuals with disabilities.

I know that Hawai'i must spend about \$320 million in federal funds by December 30, 2020. I want Maui County to request and use some of that money to support families. Some of the most pressing needs I see are:

- A lack of accessible academic support for youth with disabilities that are obtaining high school equivalencies (lack of appropriate tutoring and lack of funding for tutoring)
- Wrap around support services for "Gap" Veterans and Military Dependents. "Gap" is defined as Veterans that are outside the time in service requirement or have received other than honorable discharge status to qualify for Veteran Affairs related services.
- Emergency and immediate Cash to cover basic needs for families while awaiting SNAP, Housing Support, or other financial assistance programs/services

- Nonprofits and other Service Agencies face financial cuts and are asked to maintain or increase their service counts with fewer resources, which are unreasonable and unrealistic and causes an additional burden to our already taxed community.


In addition to requesting your help in spending the federal money on Maui, please make the following information public on the county website:

- How much federal and state money has been allocated for Maui County because of the pandemic
- How much of that has been spent and what it has been spent on
- What the plans are for any remaining amounts
- Who is informing the County's decisions about these funds, and the best ways for families to get involved in the process?

Please continue to hold public meetings on this topic and make all documents related to these issues accessible to the public.

Thank you for your service to the County and your attention to my testimony.

Sincerely,



Keku DePonte