

Aloha Kakahiaka Chair and Council Members. My name is Desilee Kamakanikailialoha'ailana Santiago. I am a member of Maui Tenants and Workers Association as well as 4th generation Maui born resident. My grandson Nu'uokane is 6th generation Maui born resident.

After our last HLU committee meeting on 9/26, I was optimistic that our council and administration was ready to create legislation to help us, the working class. The following morning, I received multiple messages with the news clip regarding Chair Kama's comments on rent stabilization.

I reached out to Chair Kama's staff and received an email stating that the story was accurate and that the HLU Chair is not entertaining legislation that would directly regulate rents because of the chilling effects it would have on the housing market (per the developers that contacted her).

Quote from Chair Kama –

“One **clear effect** of rent stabilization or control is the loss of **future investment** and therefore the loss of future attainable housing”

-**what is clear?** How can this be a clear effect if it has never been implemented and tried and tested? One thing is clear, if we don't do something about this soon, more people will have left and the issues associated will be compounded TEN FOLD.

-**Future investment?** We don't have a future here if we're driven out of our home and forced to leave.

Developers and investors are businessmen and women. Therefore, they will adjust and weigh out the options vs the risk if they decide to invest here in the future. They are in it to make money, they're not doing it for our benefit. And if they are...thank you very much, but let's get real. They are in it for the return of their investments. And we, the people of Maui, are NOT their investment. Our lives are not theirs to dictate. Period.

WE are taxpayers...as soon as we get our first jobs. Summer jobs, part-time jobs when we're 15-16 years old. All the way up to retirement. WE ARE THE INVESTORS into our infrastructure and into our communities. Generation after generation. We live here, we work here, we volunteer here.

Like Member Rawlins-Fernandez said Monday night, our grandparents had children, they have children, their children had children, we grew up together, friends and neighbors and so on. My cousins were my best friends growing up. My children will never have that. Everyone has moved away, as soon as they finish school they leave and most don't return. Why? Because it's always a constant struggle here, and it's not supposed to be that way.

We are not on vacation, we go to work every day. Some of us have more than 1 job and still struggle with the cost of goods and services. I just want to live in peace and have my children and grandchildren live in peace. Be able to thrive physically, mentally, emotionally, professionally. We work hard, we contribute to our communities. We deserve dignified housing, truly affordable housing and quality of life here on our island. This IS OUR Island! We care for it, we cultivate it. The reason people love coming here is because of what WE have done here. Nobody comes here to see an apartment building and say to themselves "Well I bet that's an affordable housing project". They come to see the island, the culture, the beautification that WE pay for.

Statements like "The developers are nervous about what types of policies are being proposed", or "Investors are taking a second look at Maui" are not the questions that we need to be asking. How about we ask "If all the local families leave Maui, then what will Maui look like?" Or "Do we care about our local families staying here?" OR "Why did I run for office? Was it to invoke some sort of change?" Most of the time (most...not all) individuals run for office, whether it be local or national, with "good intentions". The intention of making changes in areas that they see would be beneficial in some way, according to them, to the betterment of their community, or county, or state, etc. But most often than not, the corruption of politics has a way of overpowering those individuals, not usually all at once, but little by little. It may not be noticeable at first, but then when you look back at the beginning and then the present day, you see the pattern of what has been happening. Time and time again, this is nothing new, especially in politics. That being said, what is the legacy that we want to leave to our keiki, our descendants? Is it a place that they can no longer thrive in? Or is it a place where they will be able to continue to live, raise their own families from generation to generation. Our ancestors would be ashamed of what has happened lately. Our very own Kupuna are forced to leave the only place they have known to be "home".

home (noun)

1. the place where one lives permanently, especially as a member of a family or household.

Home (verb)

1. To return by [instinct](#) to its territory after leaving it.

That empty feeling of being ripped and forced from your home. Having to be transplanted to another place. When you transplant something, what happens?

1. All transplants suffer '**shock**' for a few days, from suddenly being in a new environment, in new soil and with new neighbors; it makes them weaker, and vulnerable to pests such as slugs and aphids. Small transplants adapt more quickly than large ones, because there is less of a check to growth.

Keiki adapt quicker when transplanted vs. Kupuna or ourselves. Kids are resilient, but the time of their growth and foundation is determined during this time. Take them away from their foundation, it exposes them to things that make them more vulnerable. It takes a village...more like it takes an island.

RPT exemptions benefit the homeowner/landlord, not necessarily the tenant.

You cannot mandate morality or force someone to do what is right. That is something the person decides for themselves.

Affordable housing does not benefit the ones who either do not qualify, or are unable to afford what they "qualify" for.

We should stop worrying about developers and investors' interests and invest in ourselves here. We work hard and continue to work hard. Struggling day in and day out...raising our kids to be respectful...helping our neighbors...just trying to survive.

We shouldn't have to merely survive. We should be able to thrive!

No one wants to be responsible for making the wrong decision. Then why are we even here? Why bother with all of this? You expect us to be honest, hardworking, kind human beings and keep taking what is dished out. All we want is to live a peaceful, joyful life. Raise our keiki and moopuna to be honest, hardworking and kind human beings.

Federal Grant for Housing Production – Senator Schatz talked about it back in July. Where is this money being allocated?

Over \$330 million dollars in Federal grants, disaster loans from SBA for businesses and residents.

Mahalo.

HLU Committee

From: Desilee Santiago <desilee.santiago@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 9, 2024 3:58 PM
To: HLU Committee
Cc: Desilee Santiago
Subject: Written Testimony - Desilee Santiago
Attachments: Written testimony 10.9.24 2.docx

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See attached.

Desilee Santiago
808-357-8960
Desilee.santiago@gmail.com