

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**  
Council of the County of Maui

**MINUTES**

**April 14, 2026**

**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

**CONVENE:** 6:00 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Councilmember Yuki Lei K. Sugimura, Chair  
Councilmember Kauanoe Batangan, Vice-Chair  
Councilmember Tom Cook, Member  
Councilmember Gabe Johnson, Member  
Councilmember Alice L. Lee, Member  
Councilmember Tamara Paltin, Member  
Councilmember Keani N.W. Rawlins-Fernandez, Member  
Councilmember Shane M. Sinenci, Member

**EXCUSED:** Councilmember Nohelani U'u-Hodgins, Member

**STAFF:** Ellen McKinley, Legislative Analyst  
Lori Ann Tengan, Committee Secretary  
Ben Silva, Communications Specialist  
Lei Dinneen, Council Services Assistant Clerk  
Ryan Martins, Council Ambassador

**OTHERS:** Testifiers  
Linda Puppolo, Executive Director, Maui A.I.D.S. Foundation  
Starlyn Worthington  
Adele Rugg, Director, Maui Green and Beautiful  
B. Reid  
Kay Anderson, President, Wailea 808  
Kelly King  
George Burnette, Member, Maui Nui Marine Resource Council  
Wayne Higa, Pastor, Ka'ahumanu Church  
John Laney, President, Kihei Community Association  
Walter Murphy, Board Treasurer, Maui A.I.D.S. Foundation  
Gylian Solay  
Mary Groode  
Carolyn Manuel, Administrative Assistant and Receptionist, Maui A.I.D.S. Foundation  
Dustin Paradis, Executive Director, Marine Institute at Maui Ocean Center  
Terani Richmond, Project Member, 'Āinakūko'a O Waiohuli Kai  
Larissa Treese, Director of Operations, Marine Institute at Maui Ocean Center  
Kaleo Demello, Project Member, 'Āinakūko'a O Waiohuli Kai  
Jake Carton, Activist Leader, Maui Indivisible  
Cody Nemet Tuivaiti, Project Leader, 'Āinakūko'a O Waiohuli Kai

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

Frank Barbosa

Bevanne Bowers, Executive Director, Mediation Services of Maui

Kellin Ketchum, Medical Case Manager, Maui A.I.D.S. Foundation

Anna Merritt, Office Team, Maui Economic Opportunity (MEO) Head Start

Susan Ellingwood, Chief of Finance, Boys & Girls Club of Maui

Sage Kim Seu, Health Care Enrollment Specialist, Maui A.I.D.S. Foundation

Robin Garrison, Street Medicine Nurse Practitioner, Project Vision Hawai'i

Tiare Sua, Deputy Director, Maui A.I.D.S. Foundation

J. Kamiki Carter, Board Member, Maui Comic Con; co-founder, Maui Rapid Response; Disaster Case Manager, Ho'ōla ia Mauiakama Disaster Long Term Recovery Group

(+25)additional attendees

**PRESS:**     *Akakū: Maui Community Television, Inc.*

---

CHAIR SUGIMURA: . . .*(gavel)*. . . Welcome, everybody, to our Budget, Finance, Economic Development Committee. We're so happy to be here in Kihei, in South Maui. And just want you to know that this meeting is being conducted in accordance with the Sunshine Law. And it is now 6:00, starting right on time. I'd like to ask Councilmember Tom Cook to introduce himself and the rest of the Councilmembers.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Thank you, Chair. Can everybody hear us in the back? The acoustics okay? Yeah. And this...it's never great here, but main thing you can hear and let us know. So, welcome, everybody. I'm really happy to be in South Maui with the Council for our district budget hearing. Looking forward to hearing your folks...your opinions and wants and needs. Hopefully some compliments and cheers along with everything else. And I have here on my left, Member Sinenci from Hāna. Chair Lee from Wailuku. Vice-Chair Sugimura from Upcountry. Member Batangan from Kahului. Member Rawlins-Fernandez from Molokai. Member Paltin from West Maui. And Member Johnson from the Island of Lāna'i.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you, everybody. I would like to also thank our Staff who are creating this event as we go along. So, thank you very much for Ellen, Jen (*phonetic*), and Lei. There's Stacy there. Thank you very much. Also want to thank *Akakū*. Vinny, thank you. Thank you. And this meeting is being conducted live. So, there's somebody at *Akakū* office who's also helping us. So, whoever that is, thank you, everybody. This meeting is created so that we can listen to you. And we wanted to come to you and hear what you think of...is important in your communities or in general. You can talk about anything in our budget.

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

**ITEM 1:                    PROPOSED FISCAL YEAR 2026 BUDGET FOR THE COUNTY  
OF MAUI** (BILL 55 (2026), BILL 56 (2026), BILL 57 (2026), BILL 58 (2026),  
BILL 59 (2026), BILL 60 (2026), BILL 61 (2026), BILL 62 (2026), BILL 63 (2026),  
BILL 64 (2026), BILL 66 (2026), and RESOLUTION 26-63)

CHAIR SUGIMURA: We have one agenda item today, which is agenda...BFED-1, which is the Fiscal Year '27 Budget for the County of Maui. And as you know, we're going through the process of reviewing it in detail by talking to departments. We've gone through many communities like tonight and have a couple more to go. And...but what you say is very important. So, we understand if what is in the budget is relevant to what you think is important. You will have three minutes to testify. When you come up, please also give your name, what organization you're from. And if you are in the existing budget, we are probably going to ask you the question, so be prepared...how much are you in the budget for, or if you are not in the budget, what are you asking for and why? And if you could provide us that information. We also like to receive copies of written testimony, which will verify what you did speak on. And if you don't have it ready tonight, if you could send it to us so that we can have copies of it. It's very important. So, at this time, I'd like to take the first testifier, please.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the first testifier is Linda Puppolo, to be followed by Starlyn Worthington.

**. . . BEGIN PUBLIC TESTIMONY . . .**

MS. PUPPOLO: I got it. I got it. Shorties. . . *(laughing)*. . . Aloha. I love you guys. You are the best Council that we can imagine. I've got to say that thank you first. The additional funding you gave us last year has...oh, by the way, I'm Linda Puppolo and I'm with the Maui A.I.D.S. Foundation. The money that you gave us last year to enhance our budget was critical to operations. It allowed us to travel to Molokai. In fact, we have a crew stuck on Molokai right now that wanted to be here to testify tonight, but may not make it. It was critical and it gave us a lot of outreach money to be able to go to Lānaʻi and Molokai, and we travel there regularly now, as well as Hāna. We've made...we've added 20 new...new community partnerships in the last year. We work with all different kinds of partners, Aloha House, CHAMP, Methadone Clinic, the correctional center. We go into the correctional center. So, the work that we do is really integral to...you know, to keeping sexually transmitted disease...infections under control so they don't spread. I don't know if you know this, but untreated STIs, some of them can cause cancer. They can cause all kinds of other illnesses. They can make women infertile. These things are very, very important. Recently at the FY '27 Federal budget, we were targeted as a radical organization for simply doing our jobs, which is creating safe spaces in support groups for, you know, LGTPQ...LGBTQ community and to also distribute massive amounts of condoms and lubricants. I'm happy to report that we're not going to stop doing those things. It...but on the other hand, the thousands of phone calls that we've received in the last week have been disruptive. And they're...some of them weren't nice. And we're...we're very targeted right now. They want to take away all of our HOPWA money. HOPWA means Housing Opportunities for People With A.I.D.S. And what that

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

would do is...you know, 79 percent of that money is in direct service to housing subsidies. And what it would do is it would transfer it into transitional housing instead of permanent housing for our HIV people. About 50 percent of our HIV adults are over 65 and many of them are very ill. We lost 8 percent of our client base last year because they...they were deceased. So, we're looking at very sick people with a constant inflammatory problem because of the disease. . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . So, what I want to tell you is that thank you. Because the critical money that you gave us is critical to keeping us going. So, if you have any questions, I'd be happy to answer them.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you very much. Member Johnson has a question for you.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Thank you, Linda, first off, for all that you do. You're saying you're being targeted by Federal...by the Feds. How much HOPPA...HAPPA [sic] money?

MS. PUPPOLO: HOPWA money.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: How much is that?

MS. PUPPOLO: The County stands to lose \$1.5 million in Federal subsidies for recipients.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: So...but this year you did not lose that money? They're just...

MS. PUPPOLO: Not yet.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: They might take it away. And...

MS. PUPPOLO: In the FY '27 budget.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Okay. Is that the only Federal funds that are in jeopardy?

MS. PUPPOLO: No.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Okay.

MS. PUPPOLO: The Ryan White program, which is for case management and lots of different services for HIV patients is also been cut about in half.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: So, what's the number on that one?

MS. PUPPOLO: We got cut, our...well, just in...I don't know the total number. The...we got cut in our subsidy...our case management in half. 50,000 off of that. So, if we were getting 390,000, then we're down to probably 200,000.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Okay.

MS. PUPPOLO: Yeah.

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Thank you.

MS. PUPPOLO: You're welcome.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. No other questions. Thank you very much, Linda. Next testifier, please.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Starlyn Worthington, to be followed by Adele Rugg.

MS. WORTHINGTON: Hi, I'm Starlyn Worthington. I live in Kahului. I ride the MEO van...I ride the...sorry. Okay. I'm Starlyn Worthington. I live in Kahului. I ride the MEO Handi-Van (*phonetic*), the shopping van. I use this van, it's because I don't have transportation. I use it to the doctor and to shopping. And I live by myself. And I really enjoy the van. And if I don't have the van, I don't have transportation. And I mean, I'm new to this. This is my first time doing this. So, I really don't know what to say or expect. I mean, I enjoy Maui a lot. I...I just moved here maybe two years ago, and I just started under three years riding the Handi-Van. And I really appreciate the drivers and the dispatchers. When I call them, they're very friendly. And I do love their new program they have that they call before they arrive. And I have no problem. But if I don't have MEO, I don't know how I'm going to do it. I basically use it for the doctors and the shopping. And that's about it. Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you very much. Any questions? Seeing none. Thank you very much.

MS. WORTHINGTON: Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Next testifier, please.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Adele Rugg, to be followed by B. Reid.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you, Jared, for adjusting the mic.

MS. REID: Thank you, everyone, for giving me a voice. I'm also someone who uses MEO. And I know a lot of people that have had benefit from MEO. My God, from the (*audio interference*) people get food, they help transport people, transport people to get housing, to housing, and they're still helping on that. They...during COVID, they stepped in very strongly and helped out. When I was at Pukalani pool, the day that there was a tsunami warning. And I remember, they finally opened up the community center in Pukalani. And they were picking people up from resorts and hotels and taking them to the community center to...to be safe. And MEO, people...the...the buses stayed open until really late at night, getting people transported back to where it was safe, if they could get a place to be safe. They work on youth, they work on kūpuna, they work on...oh, my gosh, there's so many things. It's five organizations in one, really, five agencies. They...they...they support inmates, they do Spanish translation services.

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

They help people with rental and utility assistance when they need it. Head Start for the kids, the keiki, youth services, amazing community action. It's like the aloha institution of Maui, and it's really important that we're generous, very generous with them. With the war going on, the gasoline prices are going to soar, electric's going to soar, and MEO is going to need an extra hefty support. And I just want to thank you for letting me talk. Aloha.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Thank you very much. Any questions? Seeing none. Next testifier is Adele Rugg, I think.

MS. RUGG: Thank you. Good evening and aloha, Councilmembers. Welcome to my hood. I am so happy to have you in Kihei, and I'm wearing a couple of hats tonight. One of them first is MEO. I am a board member for MEO, and the lady that just spoke before me said everything I wanted to say about MEO. They're awesome. They do so much. They've touched the lives of so many on this island. So, please, please, please continue to fund MEO. My next hat is green. Maui Green and Beautiful. Thank you for putting out these beautiful green, beautiful la 'ulu bread fruit tablecloths for us. And we have toys. This is Irene (*phonetic*). She's also a Member of Maui Green and Beautiful. And I want to thank the Mayor's budget for putting \$77,000 into the budget for the Citizen Forester Program. We have our shirts...da, da, da, da. . . .(*laughing*). . . And also for ReShade Maui. I did print out and have given to each one of you information about what the \$77,000 will do. But also, with the Citizen's Forester Program, we're basically going out to look at the trees of Maui. Toys. We measure the canopy of the tree. We measure...if we had a tree...with the circumference of the tree. And we even have this like camera that you can look at the base of the tree and go up and you can tell how high the tree is. And again, this is all from the funding for the Citizen's Forester Program. Growing older is not for sissies. Let's see here. What's it say? The Citizen's Forester Program was created, I have to say it, on the island of O'ahu. It's tough to say, but they did start the program, and they have tree plotted over 138,000 trees. And the program is established in...also in O'ahu, Kaua'i, and Guam. The inventory that we are starting to work on on Maui is in our parks. We've done Kalama Park, which the inventory has not been done throughout the County. This program creates community awareness of trees. And the participants learn to use the tools that I just showed you to identify trees, to meet the community, and enjoy the benefits of being outdoors. By doing this, the inventory will . . .(*timer sounds*). . . have I got three minutes already? Okay. Anyway, also the other toy that we have, it's about urban trees. And we take this out and we identify the trees by the leaves of the trees, and it tells what kind of tree it is. Mahalo. Thank you. I appreciate all what you do, because nobody knows the work that you do for the community.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you.

MS. RUGG: Aloha.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you, Adele. Any questions? See none. Thank you. Next...

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: . . .(*inaudible*). . .

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Oh, Member Rawlins-Fernandez has a question for you, Adele.

MS. RUGG: Yes. Am I a kūpuna? What? No?

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo for your testimony tonight. I'm looking at...and mahalo for the hard copy of your budget. Looking at the ReShade Maui Program and your, I guess, index cards or...to figure out which tree is there. Looking at the Stop the Chop, and does it matter if the trees are native or not? Or, you know, like if they're supposed to be here or if they're like sucking up all the groundwater before it gets to the muliwai?

MS. RUGG: We're looking at all trees. And I know that there's an issue with natives. But we're looking at all trees to try to document so that...and this tree plotter will...it goes into a little computer, like a cell phone. And the tree will have a number. And it will also tell the type of...again, type of tree, how healthy it is. It's quite amazing. But it's all trees.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Okay. Mahalo.

MS. RUGG: Thanks.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you very much. Next testifier, please.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Kay Anderson, to be followed by Kelly King.

MS. ANDERSON: Hi. My name is Kay Anderson. I'm the President of Wailea 808. I spoke with you earlier today. Thank you for taking the time to listen to my questions today. I understand that you may not be able to provide answers immediately, but I hope you will consider these questions carefully and ensure that the budgeted numbers accurately reflect the real requirements and solutions identified through your review. I will be referring specifically to the water section, CBS number 6649, project name Central Maui/South Maui Desalination Water Treatment Plant. One, what process of desalination is planned for this water treatment plant? Thermal, either distillation, multistage flash, multi-effect distillation, or membrane-based, which is reverse osmosis, nanofiltration, or a hybrid system. Two, what type of power source will be used to operate the plant? HECO, solar, or micronuclear? To me, the Renewable Portfolio Standard, RPS, or the Hawaiian Clean Energy Initiative, HCEI, goals for 2045, only solar or micronuclear would appear capable of meeting these standards. Three, where will the facility be located, and does the County currently own the site? Four, what will be the source of feed water for the desalination? Five, what are the projected output capacities for this facility, and how many residents and visitors will it be designed to support? Six, has there been any projection of potential water rate increases for property owners? Will these costs be shared Countywide, or applied only to the customers directly connected to this desalination system? Seven, given the Director of Water's prior experience with a reverse osmosis project in Tucson, where the facility was designed to blend aesthetically within...with the nearby homes, will a similar approach

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

be pursued here to maintain Maui's scenic beauty and community integrity? And eight--I forgot to add it--will there be a battery backup when we have power outages in Maui? Because water is a critical product that people need. I appreciate your time and effort in addressing these questions. I am extremely supportive of desalination technology as part of Maui's water resilience strategy, but I want to ensure that sufficient funding and planning are in place to make this project successful. Mahalo. Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Can we have a copy of your testimony?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes . . . *(inaudible)* . . .

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Oh, we do have it already. Okay. Thank you very much. Any questions?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Member Paltin, as well as Member Sinenci. Oh, just her. Member Paltin?

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you. These are great questions. Number five, I was wondering...it says TGD, is that like trillion gallons a day?

MS. ANDERSON: Um-hum.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Oh, okay.

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Just wondering.

MS. ANDERSON: And I'm...I don't know. It could be more. If the information --

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: A million gallons a week...

MS. ANDERSON: -- was there. I was guessing it's going to be in the trillions.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Oh, okay.

MS. ANDERSON: I just don't know.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you very much. We have...no, she was the only one.

MS. ANDERSON: Oh, okay. Okay.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Next testifier, please.

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Kelly T. King, to be followed by George Burnette.

MS. KING: Thanks. You're already anticipating my height. Thanks, Chair. . . .*(laughing)*. . . Thanks, Kay. By the way, I tried to answer you on Nextdoor, and I wrote this big answer, because you're right, it's planning. And that's kind of what I wanted to testify again. Thank you all for being here. It's great to be at the budget meetings again, because I think we had a little interruption there. But I wanted to talk to you about what's happening in South Maui with...and it's...it's been happening for a decade or longer, but it's been emphasized more with the recent storm damage. What we're experiencing is a lack of infrastructure, is the defunding of the wetlands. We were marching along and trying to...for a few years there, trying to fund the restoration of the wetlands, which absorbs a lot of that stormwater that we're getting flooding from. Everybody knows it. Everyone talks about it. You guys defunded it the last two years. We need to be putting at least a million dollars a year into these wetland restoration projects. Cody's project, I know he got some funding. You cut the Lā'ie, the...Robin's...Robin's project, which was going to try to solidify all those connected wetlands. I think you cut Brandi's project, too. So, those...there's...there's some work that was going on that stopped going on. You also...the Maui Planning Commission took out of our community plan the policies that would have required infrastructure before the housing. And to me, that's criminal. It now says...it used to say there must be this infrastructure. Now it says, it would be nice. And they think that's a policy. It's a suggestion. So, I just...I'm here to tell you that, you know, a lot of people are talking about what's happening on the national level. We're watching the President, our dictator President, build the golden ballroom, while people are getting their healthcare cut and their...and their...and their food stamps cut. And it feels a little bit like that here. You know, you guys cut affordable housing. You voted against increasing the affordable housing in Wailea 670--not you guys, because I know you voted for it--at the same time that you're...you're approving all luxury housing. All luxury housing projects are getting...there should be no luxury housing until we get infrastructure in, and the affordable housing needs to come first. And so, that's...that's one of the things that we're experiencing here. The two biggest issues in Kihei have been, for the last two decades, the North-South Collector Road, which nothing is getting done about. Now we're showing how we need it because parts of South Kihei Road are getting wiped out. And this is what we talked about ten years ago, that this was going to be happening. So, we need that North-South Collector Road. And then we get promised...every new mayor who comes in here promises it to us, and the MPO had it at the top of the list, now it's...I don't know where it's at. So, the other thing I wanted to talk to you about was what's happening with Wailuku Water. Because the Wailuku Water system, you know, it went down. There's major damage, millions of dollars' worth of damage. And...well, first we heard that Wailuku Water was going bankrupt. And we thought, great, now the County can take it over. Then they decided, no, we're not going to go bankrupt. You can buy us for \$13 million. Well, that's . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . first of all, it's not worth that much. And the land that they're trying to get the County to buy is conservation land, which is worth nothing because you can't do anything on it. So, I'm just asking this Council to support the Mayor in whatever move we have to make to take over Wailuku Water system. We may even get that water authority going before the East Maui water system because they're so under. But all the...all the farmers along that 900 acre stretch of Mike Atherton's ag land are

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

hurting. And we...we have no water right now. We have...personally, I'm not sure how long the other farmers can last. We've talked to the Mayor. We can . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . last until about middle of June without water, and then we're off. We're done farming. We can't...

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you.

MS. KING: We need the water.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. If you would like to submit written testimony, I see you have your piece of paper. We would like...appreciate receiving it. Any questions for the testifier?

COUNCILMEMBER SINENCI: Chair?

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Member Sinenci?

COUNCILMEMBER SINENCI: Thank you, Kelly, for your testimony this evening. For the farmers that are not receiving water, what kind of long-term damage as you wait for...if...if you're ever going to get water?

MS. KING: Well, we...you know, have a crop in the ground. It's going to be blooming next month. Sunflowers. And that doesn't need any more water right now because there's so much water in the ground. If we're not able to get water by, say, mid-June, we can't plant another crop on Maui. On Kaua'i, we're doing...we're going gangbusters on Kaua'i. But on Maui, we...you know, we have to consider whether we want to close that farm down. The other farmers on Bobby Pahia's land...we've got Hanalei, who's doing the...you know, the piggery, and he needs water for the feed. And...and we have taro growing there. There are small farmers doing things like turmeric and specialty crops. They all need water. And they're doing...you know, a lot of theirs is very labor-intensive too. But if we can't get the water out there, I'm not sure. We're going to have a meeting. We actually...the meeting that we had with the Mayor, Koa...Koa Hewahewa was there from the Department of...the County Department of Ag. And so, we're going to try to have a meeting. He wants us to get together and get a working group together. But, you know, the farmers aren't the only ones on that water either. The County takes a lot of water from the Wailuku Water system. And this is the opportune time. I think whatever we have to do, whatever you guys have to do. I mean, it'd be great to have a resolution like we did with the East Maui water, right? Because I think this Mayor that we have right now is a lot more amenable to supporting that resolution than the previous one . . .*(laughing)*. . . when we did the Water Authority resolution. So, you know, if you guys can...if you can do that as quickly as possible and get that out there so that he knows that he has the support to acquire that water system.

COUNCILMEMBER SINENCI: Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Member Paltin has a question.

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you. I just was wondering, did you have a contract with Wailuku Water Company for them to be delivering you water? Because that's part of the issue with Maui Land & Pine. If we buy the system, then we are obligated under all their contracts. Did you have a contract?

MS. KING: Well, we didn't personally. The contract is with Mike Atherton. When we get our invoices, when we...when we get our bills for water, we see how much each farmer is paying, and it's not the same. . . .*(laughing)*. . . You know, they're charging some of us more than others. And that's not coming from Mike. That's coming from Wailuku Water Company.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: So, he has the contract with Wailuku?

MS. KING: So, he has the contract, and then he subcontracts with us. But we've also gotten a letter...he's gotten a letter. We just met with Mike Atherton on Sunday. He got a letter from Wailuku Water that I think was written before the damage was even done, saying they were going to double, possibly triple our water rates to all of the farmers on his land. And I don't know, I mean, according to...

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: So, they're not PUC regulated?

MS. KING: Well, that's what I was just going to say. Because I didn't think they were. But when we met with the Mayor and...and Kimo from the Department of Ag, Kimo said they are under PUC and they shouldn't be allowed to raise the rates. So, now we're wondering how were they able to raise our rates 30 cents higher than Bobby's rates without going to the PUC? So, there's something screwy happening there. And, you know, I would...you know, he doesn't...the Mayor doesn't like to hear the words eminent domain, but I would say that's how we should take this over. It's a public trust. It's not being well cared for. We had a farmer who was working on our land with us who was one of the original people that built that system. And there was never any repair going on until something broke. So, there was not...there was not constant maintenance. There was not any kind of regular operation you would expect to see with a private water system like that.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: I just was asking because I spoke with William Tam, the former deputy DLNR, and he was saying that condemnation doesn't always erase the old contracts. But if you have contracts with the company and they're not delivering, whether they're bankrupt or not, you should sue them is what he said.

MS. KING: Well, I mean, what they're saying to us basically is that they will deliver it, but it's going to cost...right now, everybody's paying around 50 cents per 1,000 gallons, and they want to raise it up to a dollar, or possibly \$2. None of those farmers on Bobby's land...we won't...we wouldn't be able...we wouldn't stay in business for a dollar 1,000 gallons, that's way too high for a local farmer. So, basically, they just raise the rates to the point where you're not going to want their...the contract anyway. And Mike...Mike knows that. Mike Atherton knows that. He knows his farmers can't...can't afford that, so...

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: But if their PUC regulated, even that wouldn't be legal, right?

MS. KING: That's what I...well, that's what I don't know. You know, I mean we're going to look into that. And we're being asked by the department of...our County Department of Ag to supply them with the invoices that we had before and that we have now that shows all the different rates and how they've kind of changed. And then also...

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Sounds like the lawyers are going to make out with this then.

MS. KING: That's always what happens, right? The lawyers make out. I mean, that's what happened with the Lahaina fire stuff. The lawyers made out better than anybody. But you know, whatever we could do to help...help the County acquire that land. I've actually talked to a lot of business people about it. And one of the most prominent business people here in South Maui told me, I would never...I would never support the County taking over anything except the water. . . .*(laughing)*. . . You know, because it's a public trust. It should be in the hands of the government.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Okay. Thank you.

MS. KING: Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Next testifier.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is George Burnette, to be followed by Wayne Higa.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Could you speak a little louder? The acoustics here are...

MR. BURNETTE: Talking to me?

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Yeah...everybody, I guess.

MR. BURNETTE: Okay.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Yeah. Hard to hear.

MR. BURNETTE: It is a little bit hard to hear in the back because there's kind of an echo. So, yeah, we're having trouble in the back hearing.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: If...if you keep the mic like ridiculously close to your mouth when you're moving --

MR. BURNETTE: Okay.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: -- like this and like this, it works.

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

MR. BURNETTE: Okay. Well, I got to try to read this too, so... All right. Good evening, Chair and Councilmembers. My name is George Burnette. I'm testifying in favor of your continued support for the Maui Nui Marine Resource Council and also for Ka'ahumanu Church. I'm testifying as an employee of the MNMRC and also as a member of the church. This Council has supported the Maui Nui Marine Resource Council for many years. It's in the budget again for this year. And we are so very grateful for that support. Our goals are healthy coral reefs, clean ocean water, and abundant native fish. Our programs now include community-based coral restoration ongoing in South and West Maui, water quality monitoring now including Molokai, reef-friendly landscaping, and scientific studies as well. In 2025, we established a coral restoration area in South Maui, giving damaged corals a second chance at survival, and now West Maui is included in that. The group, Hui O Ka Wai Ola, where I work, is sponsored by the MNMRC, and it's monitoring water quality on 41 beaches on Maui Island and now 5 on Molokai. The MNMRC developed Hawai'i's first reef-friendly landscaping program, reaching out to hotels and businesses, offering a five-day course to manage their landscaping in a more reef-friendly way. And we have conducted reef health surveys throughout the year telling us how our reefs are changing and where help is needed. This Council's continued support for the Maui Nui Marine Resource Council and for Hui O Ka Wai Ola is critical to the continuation of these programs. In reference now to Ka'ahumanu Church, our current structure was built in 1876. We ask for monies not as a religious organization, but to restore a building which is on the National Register of Historic Places. Our church is a treasured Wailuku landmark and was named for Queen Ka'ahumanu by her request. The surrounding land is rich in the history of Hawai'i. The pōhaku in our building and elsewhere nearby date from the time that the land was the royal compound of Kahekili II. Some of the earliest Hawaiian missionaries are buried there, including Bartimeus Pua'aiki, who was the first Native Hawaiian to be licensed to preach Protestant Christianity. This past year with monies coming mostly from this Council, we have restored the bottom half of our church. This is great news and we're very, very happy. The bad news is that the top half of the church remains to be restored and that will be much more expensive. We have a project manager, we have contractors who have submitted bids, and we have the necessary permits. Our only current need now is the money to do the work. Those of us attending...this is not in the budget, the Ka'ahumanu Church. Those of us attending Ka'ahumanu Church are so very grateful and humbled by the support of this Council. Maui County has so many pressing needs today. If our church should not make it into our next budget, we will remain ever thankful for your support. Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you very much. Any questions? Seeing none. Thank you. Next testifier, please.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Wayne Higa, to be followed by John Laney.

MR. HIGA: Aloha. Wayne Higa, Pastor at Ka'ahumanu Church and...and Kihei resident. So, mainly we're here to say mahalo, mahalo, mahalo for all the support over the years and...and to let you know that we...we were able to spend all the money you gave us. So, if you come up to the church, anytime you like see where the money was spent, just

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

give me a call. We'll open the doors. Look real nice, as long as you no look up. And with the past weather, yeah, we did...especially Kona storms. So, it does actually get down. It needs to come down about four levels before the water actually gets into the church. So, with these Kona storms, yeah, so it looks like we got to go get the Foodland Rug Doctor again and go suck up water. But we continuing forward with the project. I don't think we made it into the budget. If you can find extra money inside there, you know, we need about a million and a half. But then this next phase is...is the part that's going to cost the money because it's going to...we're going to need the scaffolding and that gets rented, so that catches up. So, again, mahalo, mahalo. On other projects, please fund Cody's project. Please fund our flood restorations. Please keep in mind, we all know in Kihei that planning over the last 30 years was junk...never worked. So, as we move forward, think forward about 30 years, everything we do. My stand is everything below the highway kind of hard for fix already. But I see work going on above the highway. We really need to start looking above there. Any projects going on up there, we need for...you know, so... But yeah, other than that, mahalo. That's all I got to say. Mahalo, mahalo.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you, Kahu. Any questions? Seeing none. Thank you very much. Next testifier, please.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is John Laney, to be followed by Walter Murphy.

MR. LANEY: Thank you. Hello, everyone. My name is John Laney. I am the President of the Kihei Community Association and tonight, I want to ask for two things. First, there is a problem with the injection well that leaks into Cove Park. And what's happening there is at overflow times and whatever, untreated wastewater is going into the injection well, which is going out into our water. And it's...the fecal particulate counts are off the charts, and it is something that can theoretically be fixed for about \$4 million. So, I'd like...the people of South Maui would like to have the \$4 million in the budget to get that fixed as quickly as possible. The second thing has to do with the flooding and that is, can we add \$5 million more to the Open Space Fund for purchasing more of the wetlands back, right? So, everyone knows that part of the problem with the flooding is that we built on wetlands. And you can't really unbuild that, but the wetlands that we have left need to be protected and we need money to buy some of those back so that the developers that own them are not going to build on them. So, respectfully, to help with the flooding that we have every year, if we can add some money back into the budget more than is already in the budget for Open Space, because we're going to need probably 20 million over the next, you know, three, four years to buy back what we need. But this will really help as part of the solution to the flooding that we all have to deal with here in South Maui. Thank you very much.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you very much. Questions? Member Paltin?

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: I just wanted to clarify about the \$4 million for the injection well at Cove Park. Is that from the Wastewater Department? Their quote for...

MR. LANEY: You know, I've heard a couple of different things, but I'm not sure. The last...the

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

person that told me the 4 million said that was like four years ago and expects that it's gone up. I don't know if we have a recent quote from the Wastewater Department.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: And...and like, I think on Thursday, we see Environmental Management. Like, if I were to say we want to fix something, what would I call it? Like, what...what's the problem that the \$4 million would address?

MR. LANEY: I would say ask Councilmember Tom Cook because he's pretty much up on it.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Oh, he's got it under control.

MR. LANEY: Yeah. Yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Okay. Never mind for me.

MR. LANEY: Okay. Yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: I'll leave it to him.

MR. LANEY: Okay. Thank you.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: I think Member Sinenci had a question.

MR. LANEY: Appreciate it.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Member Sinenci?

MR. LANEY: Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: One moment.

COUNCILMEMBER SINENCI: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Mr. Laney. You mentioned about adding 5 million to the Open Space.

MR. LANEY: Yes.

COUNCILMEMBER SINENCI: I do believe that's a restricted fund. So, I'm not sure if there are any buildings. I mean, it's just to purchase Open Space, I believe. Nothing with any structures on it.

MR. LANEY: Thank you for your question. My understanding is that where the money comes from to repurchase wetlands is sometimes a little tricky. But we're not talking about buying back wetlands that already have buildings on them. It is --

COUNCILMEMBER SINENCI: Okay.

MR. LANEY: -- buying back wetlands that have not yet been built upon.

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

COUNCILMEMBER SINENCI: Okay. Thank you for that.

MR. LANEY: Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Next testifier.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Walter Murphy, to be followed by Gylan Solay.

MR. MURPHY: Easier said than done. . . .*(laughing)*. . . My name is Walter Murphy. I'm Board Treasurer of Maui A.I.D.S. Foundation. This year, Maui A.I.D.S. Foundation will have been in existence for 40 years. HIV arrived 40 years ago. I've been associated with Maui A.I.D.S. Foundation for 18 of those years. I was director of finance and now I'm treasurer on the board. It's been interesting to see the development of the HIV epidemic. We forget that it is an epidemic. It was an epidemic and it's not finished. When we started, we started by helping people die. With the advancement of science and with your support, we now help people live, and we help people keep from acquiring unhealthy and dangerous lifestyle and disease. We reach into the community, and because of you, we're in the community. I'm here to say we provide...we have a clinic, we have a food pantry, we provide sexual counseling, we provide testing, we're in the...the correctional facility, we provide housing, we provide case management. And we don't just hand out condoms, which is what the Trump Administration cited us for by name in the budget. Our services are free. And because of your support and you looking forward and helping your...our community, you guys have had the foresight to help Maui, Molokai, and Lānaʻi, and I'm here simply to say thank you. Maui A.I.D.S. Foundation exists because of you. You aren't just an ancillary funding source, you're a pillar. I remember having an audit from the County and the conclusion of the audit was oh, my God, you guys do something. Well, yes we do, and we're proud of it and we're needed. And I just want to say thank you because you guys are integral. Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you for what you do. Any questions for the testifier? Seeing none. I met you years ago. Thank you for still continuing.

MR. MURPHY: With Daryl.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Yeah, exactly. Next testifier, please.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair the next testifier is Gylan Solay, to be followed by Mary Groode.

MS. SOLAY: Can you hear me okay? Okay. I'm closer. It's scary, it jumps back at you. . . .*(laughing)*. . . Lift it up a little? Better? Okay. I haven't been on stage for a long time, so... I want to say thank you because this is my first time attending a budget meeting. If any of you could help me with my own budget that would be great because I could use that. But I'm doing okay so far. I hear all these wonderful things that you are offering to the community and it does my heart good. I came here for four months in 2006. It's now 20 years. What happened? I don't know. But I'm here because I love Maui and Maui said stay. And it...it's heartwarming that we're all coming here to help

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

Maui as well. And I have a question about the new road going into the Pi'ilani from the tech park. So, my question is, that's like in between Lipoa and the high school and it seems like in addition to the Pi'ilani which is already overcrowded. So, what's behind the need for that road and how much of the budget was used for that? And who is it serving? So, that's my first question. And I'd like to know if you can answer that before I go on to my second question.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Yeah, we don't...we don't really answer questions, but if you stay I'd be more than happy --

MS. SOLAY: Oh, great.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: -- to talk story with you and I can fill you in on all that.

MS. SOLAY: Okay. Perfect. And I was told when the high school was built that there would be a road from the tech park in the back as an exit. Now we have a high school that has no emergency exit. There's no road. All the children that are...live on the makau [sic] side have to go makai to get across Ohukai, which has a crosswalk and a traffic light...because you can't walk across the highway with a roundabout. So, there's no way out of the back in case there's an emergency, a fire, something happens at the Pi'ilani. How do we get everybody out? I would really appreciate your consideration to have...I thought that was going to be built but I saw it was coming from the tech park down rather than across. So, please put that in the budget like ASAP because that school is going to grow to about 1,000 students. And we need that protection for them now. So, I appreciate that. And I appreciate your consideration for listening. Mahalo.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Any questions? So, thank you very much. Member...Member Cook has...has said he would talk to you after the meeting if you're available, yeah? Next testifier please.

MS. GROODE: Aloha. My name is Mary Groode. I moved to Maui 50 years ago and I've been swimming in the ocean almost every day since. I love the ocean and the reefs and protecting the fish. And I'm really in favor of funding the water quality testing, the reef restoration, all of the things that we need to keep that part of our tourist industry thriving and that part of the 'āina and the ocean healthy for the residents that live here. I represent myself in speaking, but I represent hundreds of friends that I see that swim almost every day. And if we didn't get a report about water quality, we wouldn't know where to swim. It's really important. I've had a little bit of an education sitting here waiting to speak and part of it was listening to the talk about the desalinization plant. Well, water is definitely an issue on Maui and I'm...I could be in favor of that, but one of the things that wasn't even thought about was what do you do with the excess salt that comes from that? How are you going to...you can't just put it back in the ocean. That screws it up. You can't put it on the land. That...you can't grow anything on salted land. So, that's something to really consider when you're thinking of funding this. I also am very in favor of stopping the injection well that's putting sewage at Cove Park. Cove Park is where children learn to surf. It's where everybody surfs on Maui that isn't good enough to go to Ho'okipa or somewhere with big waves. So, it's really important

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

that they're not swimming in sewage. Really important. Those are my main...main issues. Oh, the other issue is--thank you--is that we need to stop the aquarium trade. We really need to stop that. It's not okay for a few people to make a lot of money selling reef fish that denude our reefs. The reef I swim at has like two pair of butterfly fish left, and people are...I think what we need is a no...no-kill zone, a no-take zone for a few of the reefs for a couple of years to give them a chance to recover. They've shown in other places that if you stop taking things off the reef, then they do recover. So, the Ulua and Mōkapu Reef is a very special place. It's available. The public goes there. Lots of people swim there. They scuba dive there. And we really need protection there. So, thank you for considering that.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you for your testimony.

MS. GROODE: And thank you for your work.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Any questions? Member Paltin?

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you, Mary. I just wanted to clarify that you're aware that's under the State's jurisdiction about the aquarium trade and the no-take zone. I sent in my testimony at the State.

MS. GROODE: I did too.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Okay. Just clarifying.

MS. GROODE: But it doesn't hurt for everybody to know about it and also testimony and also put your...your finger on the scale. Thank you. Okay.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Member Rawlins-Fernandez has a question.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Thank you. Mahalo for your testimony tonight. Similar. So, that bill is HB 2101...if you're following.

MS. GROODE: Yes.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Our Council did take a position on supporting the ban of aquarium fish industry. Not only other places had effective bans. What's called kapu here --

MS. GROODE: Yes.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: -- that was an ancestral practice of this place as well that was integral to protecting our population. So, not just other places. And I think that was the only thing. Mahalo.

MS. GROODE: Thank you.

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you very much. Next testifier, please.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Carolyn Manuel, to be followed by Dustin Paradis.

MS. MANUEL: Hi. My name is Carolyn. I'm the administration...I'm the Admin Assistant and Receptionist at the Maui A.I.D.S. Foundation, and I've been with them for over two years. And I just want to say thank you all for your love and support and everything that you do for our organization. As a recovering addict from heroin and meth and being an IV user, I want to tell you how thankful I am. As someone who's blessed to be able to work in a place where I can see people who's still stuck in their active addiction and I get to help them through our syringe exchange program, SEP, and help distribute clean supplies to prevent them from the dangers of sharing or using old paraphernalia that can cause them great harm. I know so many people who's still in their addiction, and to know that they come to MAF to grab Narcan and food and supplies makes me so happy because it gives me a chance to live another day knowing they can...they can have clean supplies. And knowing that they have Narcan and we have so many other resources for them that can help them or another human being live another day. During my addiction, I had no idea MAF existed. I used old needles and I used other people's needles because I was clueless on what kind of services we have...we have here on the island. And with my carelessness of my addiction, I ended up overdosing numerous times. And during those times, I was really lucky. I either snapped out of it on my own or someone had Narcan on them and had to administrate Narcan to me. Maui A.I.D.S. Foundation isn't just a place to go to to get free STI testings and get free condoms. It's also a place where the homeless people in our community can come to get food. It's a place where we...it's a place where people in our...in their active addiction can come and utilize our STEP program. It's a place where we can help our clients with housing so they can continue to provide a roof over their family's heads. It's a place where we can help families get insurance, and a...and a place--where am I--where we can help our LGBTQ community get the help with name changes and gender markers. It's a place where ex-convicts such as myself can go to to do volunteer work and give back to the community that we once stole from. Maui A.I.D.S. Foundation isn't just work, it's a foundation that allows me to help others like myself. It's a place that gave an ex-drug addict and an ex-felon a purpose to help others, and for MAF to create a safe place for anyone who walks into our office. It breaks my heart knowing Maui A.I.D.S. Foundation is being attacked by the Federal Administration, knowing that they are not in the frontline of where I stand and what I see and what I know. Because if they did, they would see the miracles that happens and they would hear how grateful they are for us and the strength that they have living with HIV.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Any questions? Seeing none. That was very brave of you. Thank you very much for your advocacy. Next testifier.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Dustin Paradis, to be followed by Terani Richmond.

MR. PARADIS: Aloha, everybody. My name is Dustin Paradis. I'm here representing the Marine Institute at the Maui Ocean Center to request funding that is not listed in the Maui...or in the Mayor's budget at this time. Hawai'i's natural resources are at extreme

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

risk of collapse and we're rolling downhill with no brakes, off ramps, or safety nets in place. NGOs are working diligently to get ahead of our impending crisis but our collective resources are running thin and rapidly drying up. I'm here to represent the Marine Institute, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit with a mission to protect Maui's marine ecosystems by uniting science, community engagement, and education to restore ocean health and inspire lifelong environmental stewardship. Our programs include sea turtle stranding response for all of Maui, sea turtle rehab for the entire State of Hawai'i, coral reef restoration and research on Maui, Hawaiian monk seal shoreline education and data gathering, education and outreach, and soon we'll begin seabird rehabilitation for Maui. Since 2020, we've rescued over 1,400 sea turtles, rehabbed over 200 turtles Statewide, planted over 2,000 coral fragments, and educated thousands of individuals in marine conservation. Since October 2025, we have responded to over 500 monk seal calls. This work is supported and driven forward by our community-based volunteers. In 2025 alone, we had over 14,000 volunteer hours. Our long-term goal is to develop a marine science center to foster our marine conservation sector and provide jobs for our keiki. Our efforts are in direct response to community outcry and governmental agency requests. This directly fulfills statutory mandates for both our State and Federal governments of which they are unable to achieve on their own. MOCMI views our work and service of our natural resources and community. Coral reefs in Hawai'i are valued at over 3...\$33 billion, B with a B, billion. With coral bleaching and chronic local stressors, we are at risk of reef ecosystem collapse that would be catastrophic for our subsistence fisheries, erase animals that are central to a cultural identity, and drastically impact our economy. Our future as an island nation would be fragile at best. Through this testimony, MOCMI is humbly requesting Maui County funds to aid in the pursuit of our organizational mission, continue to build capacity to better serve our community, and provide financial stability for our...for our organization. Without these funds, it is uncertain whether we could continue to exist and achieve our current level of impact. Federal funds to support our work are threatened due to restructuring of funding allocation and funding priorities. This elimination of Federal funds leads to increased competition among nonprofits across the U.S., further exacerbating our financial fragility. In total, we are at risk of losing \$720,000 of Federal funding, and that is very difficult to replace in this funding climate. With these Maui County funds, we can improve our financial...improve our facility infrastructure, support our staff, acquire the essential supplies and equipment to continue to protect, restore, and preserve our treasured native animals for generations to come. Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you, Dustin. Any questions for Dustin? Member Johnson?

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Thank you, Dustin, for your testimony. And thank you for the white paper.

MR. PARADIS: Of course.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: I'm looking at it really quick. You only received \$4,000 from the State of Hawai'i. Is that correct?

MR. PARADIS: Yes, that's correct. That's something that we're working on. We're trying to

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

work with the...with the State to get some additional funding.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: But you are getting a lot of NOAA funding, and every...that seems to be the theme, that the Feds are cutting. So...

MR. PARADIS: Yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: And I know you're reading fast. I'm trying to follow along. Did you get NOAA funding cut, or is it just a small pot to start with?

MR. PARADIS: It's just a small pot to start with, you know, \$60,000 a year to do sea turtle stranding response State or island-wide, which isn't enough to fund one full-time position. And our hotline operates seven days a week. So, just having the dispatcher on with their salary to afford a living wage here in Maui, plus benefits, that isn't sufficient. And then we get \$100,000 per year to do the same thing for the monk seals. In this first quarter of the Federal fiscal year, we had over 800 monk seal haul-out calls alone. So, managing those calls, that call load, is difficult. And that doesn't include the sea turtles --

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Yeah.

MR. PARADIS: -- and then maintaining a land-based nursery that's the only one in Maui County.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Okay. Well, I appreciate your work. Thanks for all that you do.

MR. PARADIS: Thank you, Gabe.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Thank you, Dustin.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Oh, you got another question over here.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Another question from Member Paltin?

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Sure. So, your request is for \$300,000?

MR. PARADIS: Yes. Our request is for \$300,000, which when considering economies of scale, it's pretty cost-effective, in my humble opinion.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: And can you clarify what MTDC is?

MR. PARADIS: Oh, that's modified total direct cost when calculating grants. So, that doesn't include equipment or contracts and things like that. That's used to calculate the indirect rate when requesting funds. I didn't include any indirect rate or modified direct cost.

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Modified total direct cost.

MR. PARADIS: Yeah, yeah. So, I just requested 50,000 direct cost for the programs with no indirect cost associated.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Okay. Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you, Dustin. Oh, Member Rawlins-Fernandez?

MR. PARADIS: Aloha, Mr. Paradis. Mahalo for your testimony. Huh?

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Paradis.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Huh? Paradis?

MR. PARADIS: Oh, thank you, Tamara.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: You don't say the S?

MR. PARADIS: Thank you.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: It's French?

MR. PARADIS: Yes.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Okay. You value our coral reefs in all of Hawai'i at 33 billion in your written testimony. What is your citation?

MR. PARADIS: That's the Caesar et al. citation from, I think, in the late teens of the 2000s. So, that's a commonly cited source. It's a published, peer-reviewed paper.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Okay.

MR. PARADIS: Caesar is the author.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: I read that that's undervaluing our reefs.

MR. PARADIS: It probably is, yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Yes.

MR. PARADIS: Yeah. Absolutely.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Okay.

MR. PARADIS: It's a little bit outdated, but that's the best resource I had that was published.

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Thank you. Mahalo, Chair.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Okay. Thank you.

MR. PARADIS: Thank you all.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you very much. Next testifier, please.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next...

CHAIR SUGIMURA: How many more testifiers? Sorry. Sorry, Ellen. How many more testifiers do we have? I'm wondering if we should take a break. Oh, okay. We're fine, right? Ten more testifiers. Please proceed.

MR. RICHMOND: Aloha mai kākou. 'O wau 'o Terani Richmond. Noho wau ma Waiohuli Homestead mauka. My name is Terani Richmond, and I'm from the Waiohuli Homestead, Upcountry. I just wanted to say thank you so much for supporting all the organizations that prioritize the health of our 'āina and the protection of our natural resources. I'm here today in support of our hui 'Āinakūko'a O Waiohuli Kai. I just wanted to say that recently with the flooding we experienced, I feel like the call to restore our wetlands has never been felt more. Across the site, our wetlands sustain a large amount of water that is currently being filtered out to the ocean safely, and the area is showing signs of a healthy wetland. We're committed to caring for this 'āina and learn from the way that our landscape has changed over time. I wanted to say mahalo for supporting our efforts in changing the mindset of land restoration. We believe that incorporating our community and teaching the keiki about mālama 'āina is the only way to make long-term change in the way that we treat our native ecosystem. By instilling kuleana, we offer the opportunity to live with Hawaiian values and perpetuate the practices of our ancestors. Again, I want to say mahalo for your support, and I ask for your continued support in our efforts, and appreciate you for coming to hear everybody out tonight. Mahalo. Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Any questions? Seeing none. Thank you very much for being here. Next testifier. Oh, there's a question? Yeah. Member Paltin, has a question for you.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Just checking if you're in the Mayor's budget for the amount that you requested.

MR. RICHMOND: Right now we're in for 200. I think that 250 would be good for us, just to help for the building of our infrastructure.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: In light of the storms?

MR. RICHMOND: Yeah. Right now we all kind of wear a lot of hats. Being a smaller hui, this would help us kind of be able to do a more efficient job.

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you.

VICE-CHAIR BATANGAN: Can you repeat the name of the organization?

MR. RICHMOND: ‘Āinakūko‘a.

VICE-CHAIR BATANGAN: ‘Āinakūko‘a.

MR. RICHMOND: Yeah.

VICE-CHAIR BATANGAN: And that’s what it’s in the budget under?

MR. RICHMOND: I believe so.

VICE-CHAIR BATANGAN: Or is there...is it under a project name?

MR. RICHMOND: It’s ‘Āinakūko‘a.

VICE-CHAIR BATANGAN: Okay.

MR. RICHMOND: Yeah.

VICE-CHAIR BATANGAN: Thank you.

MR. RICHMOND: And Mālama Kakanilua.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you very much.

MR. RICHMOND: Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Next testifier.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Larissa Treese, to be followed by Kaleo Demello.

MS. TREESE: Thank you. Mahalo for this opportunity to speak today. My name is Larissa and I’m also with the Marine Institute at Maui Ocean Center. I’m here to respectfully ask for your support in funding an organization that serves Maui every single day through marine conservation, education, and community engagement. Behind the scenes, tucked in a back corner of the aquarium property, is a nonprofit carrying out work that directly supports Maui’s community, natural resources, and future in ways no other organization on island can...currently can. We operate Maui’s only sea turtle rescue and rehab hospital and coordinate a sea turtle stranding response island-wide. When someone calls our hotline about an injured or entangled turtle, it activates our trained volunteer network, more than 100 dedicated individuals, a couple of them are here with us, to help locate, assess, disentangle, and transport animals if further medical care is needed on our onsite facility. At the same time, our team provides shoreline education, helping residents and visitors understand what is happening and

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

why it matters. We also operate Maui's only land-based coral nursery, where we propagate and outplant corals to help restore reefs that provide habitat for marine life, support fisheries, protect our shorelines, and help maintain the health of our coastal waters. That work happens in partnerships with local nonprofits, researchers, schools, community members, and State agencies. Most recently, when funding ended for monk seal response efforts on Maui, NOAA approached our organization to assume that responsibility because no other organization had the capacity to do so. Even as small as we are, we felt the need to take this on. Thousands of students each year are exposed to marine science, stewardship, and career pathways that help build local capacity for the future. At the same time, we engage residents and visitors alike in understanding that protecting our ocean is directly tied to protecting Maui itself. County support would help sustain and strengthen systems already delivering measurable impact, protecting marine resources, expanding education, building volunteer engagement, and increasing environmental resilience across Maui. Mahalo.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Any questions? Seeing none. Thank you very much. Next testifier, please.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Kaleo Demello, to be followed by Jake Carton.

MR. DEMELLO: Hi. I'm Kaleo. I'd like to say thanks for your time and support. I'm from Waiohuli. I'm just here in support of our hui, like Terani, 'Āinakūko'a. We've been restoring the wetland area in Waiohuli. We host workshops with the community and visitors throughout the year. We attend different gatherings and events across Hawai'i to learn and share about various topics in 'āina and culture. Down here in Kihei, we take care and monitor two waterways, Waiohuli, Waipu'ilani, along with the connecting fishponds, shorelines, sand dunes, and over six acres of land. From the works, we continue to see success in the area's infrastructure, native seed banks, out-plantings, the sand dunes, and being a space in Kihei for the water and sediment to go, rest, and filter. So, we're grateful to be able to be doing these works, and hopefully we can continue to work alongside the County, protecting and restoring this high-impact area. Thanks.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Any questions? Seeing none. Thank you very much. I like your shirt. Next testifier.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Jake Carton, to be followed by Cody Nemet Tuivaiti.

MR. CARTON: Thank you, Jared. Aloha, honorable Councilmembers and our community. My name is Jake Carton. I'm here on behalf of Maui Indivisible, and I'm a Maui County voting resident. The Maui Police Department is the County's largest proposed departmental expense at \$140 million next year, a 10 percent increase. Yet the budget is missing how to address MPD's repeated and ongoing unlawful signing of Federal contracts behind the backs of this Council, and the failure of the MPD to comply with the State statute on sunshine and transparency. That's UIPA. The MPD is demonstrating it cannot meet statutory requirements and deadlines on something as simple as bringing forward for your approval and publicly revealing contracts it wants

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

to make or has already made with the Federal Government. We're talking ICE contracts and contracts with other already mobilized elements of Trump's police state. That is the subject of much current debate before this Council. We hope the Council has seen Corporation Counsel's opinion last month, vindicating Maui Indivisible's position that the MPD is not respecting the Council's authority. Not only is the MPD violating State laws and legal deadlines, it is doing so despite repeated and escalating interventions by the State Office of Information Practices. In addition to breaking the repeated...breaking the law repeatedly, this MPD practice is wasting our County and State tax dollars, resources, by churning unnecessary administrative and litigious communications on all ends. The County Annual Comprehensive Financial Report on page 34 says the County had "savings in the Police Department of \$5.5 million from what was budgeted." So, this is not a matter of lack of resources provided to the MPD. In fact, of the 5 new and 66 reorganized named positions in the Mayor's 2027 MPD budget, none are in the Records Office, which tracks and retrieves these Federal contracts. Regardless of whether these MPD decisions are intentional or just incompetence, the Council should tie taxpayer funding of the MPD to measurable compliance with the State laws 46-7 and UIPA, adopting an independent audit of compliance to State laws, and requiring ongoing quarterly reporting to the Council based on a corrective action plan with a goal of 100 percent compliance. The County has already implemented both audits and corrective action plans when it comes to collecting the outstanding \$4.4 million in short-term rental tax compliance and violations. There is no reason why the County cannot implement a similar regime for . . . *(timer sounds)* . . . MPD compliance and law violations. Just because the County makes the Police its highest departmental financial priority doesn't put the MPD above the law. We, the taxpayers, deserve and have a right to know what the MPD is doing with our money. The Council is the County's governmental body with the most Sunshine. There is a reason why the State Legislature forces by law the MPD to come to the Council to approve Federal contracts and to make its records open to the public. The MPD is not a private club. We deserve and have rights to Sunshine and transparency. We also deserve an MPD that obeys the law and sets a good example for our community. That, unfortunately, is not happening yet. The Council has the power of the purse and thus the responsibility to ensure we are a County of laws and equal treatment. Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you very much. Anyone have questions for the testifier? Seeing none. Thank you. Next testifier.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Cody Nemet Tuivaiti, to be followed by Frank Barbosa.

MR. TUIVAITI: Aloha mai kākou. O wau o Cody Nemet Tuivaiti. Basically raised my whole life here in Kula Kai. I am the po'o of Hui O 'Āinakūko'a. And yeah, I just want to mahalo you guys for your support over the years. I feel like with this last storm, we're really able to change a lot of the views that people see our waterways and our wetlands. Like Terani was saying earlier, we mālama two waterways...the Waiohuli and the Waipu'ilani. And for a long time, it was always looked at...these waterways were always looked at retention zones where we have to put all our water and all our sediment and send it right off to the ocean. But through our work, I feel like we've really changed that

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

mindset with the community in that area. You know, in the beginning, you know, there were a lot of questions and a lot of concerns about the work that we were doing. We managed each bank system, cleared them, uprooted all the...all the invasive trees and plants, mangroves, kiawe, so forth. And we carefully nurtured our...our native seed banks back to health. In doing so, we allowed a lot of the water during this last storm to move onto the land naturally. And it brought a whole new thinking of ways that we could utilize our 'āina to not only restore, but to reclaim areas that were open. Moving forward, I think it's very important that as we continue to kilo these areas on the ground for the amount of time that we have been, that we continue to store that data, continue that data and pass it down to our younger generations as we continue to build it. I think it's very important. I think it's a very island mindset of how we gather information. I also want to support all the other groups that are out there that are trying to do the same thing. We want to be very collaborative in the work that we're doing. We want to make sure that we're working alongside other organizations that are trying to meet us halfway. I mean, from like mauka to makai, and sharing ideas. And I'm always trying to...the...the cool thing about the work that we're doing is we're always learning because the 'āina is always teaching us, and the methodology is constantly evolving, yeah. The more we learn about the new pathways that the waters open up, the more we learn about the erosion issues and the history of these areas, yeah. I want to mahalo again for the support. We are looking for more support in the future. Currently, right now, we are on the 'Ōiwi grant for . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . 200K, and we're looking forward to hopefully 250K next year, and this will help us with our internal infrastructure of our hui. Currently, we are wearing a lot of hats to...to do the work that we need to do. For the few that are within our hui, we'd love to be able to kind of prioritize our roles so that we can do the work that needs to be done with a lot more testing, LIDAR. We've done LIDAR testing that has shown us the exact pathways of rain, runoff, which . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . have allowed us to even more so understand the way the water moves on the land. And, you know, I'd love to talk with you guys, you know, if you guys ever wanted to come on the land with us and show you guys some of the maps that we've come up with and some of the data that we've come up with as well. Mahalo.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Any questions? Member Rawlins-Fernandez has a question for you.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo, Cody, for your testimony.

MR. TUIVAITI: Mahalo.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Okay. So, you said that you're in the budget, FY '27, this budget, proposed budget for 200,000 under Department of 'Ōiwi Resources?

MR. TUIVAITI: We're in 2026 for 'Ōiwi.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Okay. Mahalo for that clarification. And then I see Maui wetlands restoration under EP&S for 950,000. But as you said, it's...it's for like at least three of you, different hui?

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

MR. TUIVAITI: For EP&S?

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Under EP&S, under Department of Environmental Management.

MR. TUIVAITI: For 2027?

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: For you folks, Save the Wetland Hui.

MR. TUIVAITI: Yeah, I'm sorry, I didn't know that.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Yeah, so it says Maui wetlands restoration grants or Maui wetland grants for 950,000.

MR. TUIVAITI: Okay.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: But it doesn't have you itemized, so we can find out how much they had planned to allocate for you folks.

MR. TUIVAITI: Awesome. Mahalo.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Okay. Mahalo.

MR. TUIVAITI: Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Any other? Next testifier?

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Frank Barbosa, to be followed by Bevanne Bowers.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Ellen, can you say that again?

MS. MCKINLEY: Frank Barbosa.

MR. BARBOSA: Hey, good evening, Councilmembers. I don't know if tonight's testimony is going to be part of the...the Mayor's budget, but I just wanted to bring up to you guys' attention my experience, what I...what I experience out in the community. Transportation-wise, we all know that over the years, from the '80s to now, population probably tripled. And having these Handi-Vans out there, doing their...trying to do their best or whatever they're doing may not be enough. And with experiences out there, I've been out there with...with other clients. I'm not here to talk down on any other agencies out here, but in reality, to bring it to you...bring it to your guys' attention that somewhere in the future, we really need a third Handi-Van out there. Only got Paratransit, you got MEO out there. But I've been out there with clients older than I am, 87 to 91, waiting inside the wet weather. And it's not fun watching these old people just suffer out there. You know, I've been out there with...with people on their...on their oxygen machines, running on battery. And we wait out there for two hours waiting for one bus service. You know, maybe you should look into one program for Uber or Lyft

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

vouchers where these Handi-Vans cannot keep up. Because MEO is a big agency and they're not just taking care of, you know, elders, and they get...they get, you know, other like Boys and Girls Club and other...other programs going in. You know, whatever it takes to help the community. Because with the gas prices, like they said, and everybody getting older...someday you guys might catch them. Just got to start now. Yeah, one other...one other transportation for the Handi-Van or try looking to some kind of program to...the bus service cannot reach there in time. Get these guys out of the weather. Because if you guys was with me and out there, you guys go feel them. Seeing how...how people walking around with oxygen machines waiting on the side of the road. Sometimes you don't have covers out there. You wait out on the side of the road. It's just how it is. So, mahalo for you guys' time. And I hope someday something happens so we can get this...this community going. Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Anybody have questions? Next testifier, please.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Bevanne Bowers, to be followed by Kellin Ketchum.

MS. BOWERS: Thank you. Aloha, Madam Chair, esteemed Members of this Committee. My name is Bevanne Bowers and for the last 11 years, I've had the extreme privilege of being the Executive Director of Mediation Services of Maui Incorporated, better known as Maui Mediation Services. And during this time, I've seen firsthand how critical County support has been and the difference that it's made to my agency. I'm here to ask that that support continue. Maui Mediation is one of five community mediation centers across the State, founded in 1982 with a simple but powerful mission to help people resolve conflict peacefully and respectfully. And over the past four decades, our organization has evolved to meet the changing needs of our community. After the Maui wildfires, Act 202 was enacted, requiring Maui Island landlords to attempt mediation before filing eviction proceedings for unpaid rent...80 percent of Act 202 mediations resulted in an agreement between landlords and tenants. It proved to be such a success that this past February, our State Legislature enacted Act 278. This time, the eviction prevention program is Statewide. And again, landlords and tenants have the opportunity to work out their own best solutions...hope instead of houselessness or having to leave the island you love. A recent SFGATE article reported that since the 2023 wildfires, Maui County has lost about 3,400 residents. Act 278 is designed to help parties communicate and stem the flow of residents leaving their homes. In March, we received 82 eviction notices. Tonight, two weeks into April, we've already received 22 more. Domestic mediations remain our most requested case type outside of Act 278. And we're also seeing an increase in consumer-merchant disputes. During a time when Maui County residents face so many stressors, the need for accessible conflict resolution services continues to grow. Community mediation is highly effective. It saves time, reduces cost, and importantly, helps preserve relationships. We ask our mediation participants to fill out feedback forms at the end of their sessions. Last quarter, 84 percent of respondents reported being satisfied with our process. And 91 percent said they would recommend mediation to others. A core principle of mediation is that no one is ever turned away due to inability to pay, and some mediations are absolutely free. Our services include mediation and conflict resolution, community education, facilitations, and civility in the workplace training. We provide these trainings

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

*... (timer sounds) ...* to residents, private businesses, and government departments. And for your review, I've included several letters of support. Mahalo for your time and consideration.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you, Ms. Bowers. Any...Member Sinenci has a question for you.

MS. BOWERS: Yes.

COUNCILMEMBER SINENCI: Mahalo, Ms. Bowers, for your testimony this evening. With Act 278, has the State provided more funding since it's expanded it to the entire State?

MS. BOWERS: What it's providing funding for is to reimburse the community centers for any expenditures, i.e. translators, if we have to contract with a mediator, meaning a paid mediator, because our mediators are volunteers. And they also give us a small stipend for the number of tenants that we are able to get to utilize mediation...because it's empowering both parties, but the tenant is the one that's really on the timeline before they'll face repercussions in court.

COUNCILMEMBER SINENCI: Thank you.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Aloha, Ms. Bowers.

MS. BOWERS: Aloha.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo for your testimony.

MS. BOWERS: Mahalo.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Okay. So, I see you in the budget for 100...Maui Mediation Services for 135,000.

MS. BOWERS: And we are grateful for the inclusion. However, with this new Act 278, we have been literally slammed, with one of my staffers no longer able to take on the cases that we have been taking on. I am in dire need of additional staff. We've had to procure a new case management system, which was much more expensive than we first anticipated. Also, cyber insurance and other incidentals and our regular ongoing costs....rent, utilities continue to go up. So, I'm trying to make sure that our agency is around for another 40 years without blowing the budget and without spending frivolously.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: So, how much did you request?

MS. BOWERS: We are requesting an additional 150, for a total of 285,000.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: 285?

MS. BOWERS: 285.

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Okay. Mahalo for that clarification.

MS. BOWERS: Thank you.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo, Chair. Member Johnson.

MS. BOWERS: Yes.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Good to see you, Ms. Bowers. And thanks --

MS. BOWERS: You as well.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: -- for doing all the work that you do in the community.

MS. BOWERS: Our pleasure.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: It's really important.

MS. BOWERS: Thank you.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Sorry if I have to ask this because I just don't know. Is it...most of your work done on unpaid rent, or is there other types of mediation you have?

MS. BOWERS: Oh, there are so many other mediations that we have. As a matter of fact, until 278, domestics, child custody, parenting plans...that, for the longest, has been our number one case type. And what's even more concerning for me are the consumer-merchant cases--the uncollected bills, the credit cards, we're seeing those skyrocketed--and we're getting a lot of those referrals from our court system and District Court.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: What do you think is the impetus on all these rising? Is it affordability? What...what is your take on that?

MS. BOWERS: As I mentioned in my testimony, there are multiple stressors. There are stressors at home. There are stressors in the workplace. Rent. Everything is kind of coming together like a perfect storm.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Yeah.

MS. BOWERS: And we are becoming more and more fractured as a community. And if we add on top of that communication breakdowns...we're not talking to one another. And that's the beauty of mediation. It gives the parties an opportunity to finally be heard and speak their minds so they can come up with creative solutions.

COUNCILMEMBER JOHNSON: Thanks for what you do, Ms. Bowers. Thank you, Chair.

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

MS. BOWERS: Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Any other questions?

MS. BOWERS: Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Seeing none. Next testifier, please.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Kellin Ketchum, to be followed by Anna Merritt.

MS. KETCHUM: Thank you. Hello, Councilmembers. My name is Kellin Ketchum. I'm a Medical Case Manager over at Maui A.I.D.S. Foundation. I would like to first thank you all for your ongoing support and funding you've offered us over the years. And thank you for taking some time and allowing me to present. Okay. So, I came here today to advocate for my clients over at Maui A.I.D.S. Foundation. The wraparound services that Maui A.I.D.S....Maui A.I.D.S. Foundation provides is extremely important and they all tie into each other. They provide our clients with resources to increase overall support, prevent homelessness, improve access to life-saving medications in order to heal and recover and be an upstanding citizen in Maui County. As I'm sure all of you know, at least one person or you have been in this predicament yourself where one unexpected event can completely change the trajectory of your life. It is not impossible to work yourself out of devastation on your own, but I think we can all agree that with community support and resources, their chances of success can be greatly increased. The wraparound services at Maui A.I.D.S. Foundation include insurance navigation, housing program, financial assistance to individuals that meet qualifying requirements, resources to other low-income applications and assistance, food pantry, linking with medical care providers, sexual transmitted infection prevention and testing, harm reduction services, and medical case management to people living with HIV. Due to your ongoing support, these are all free to community members. Okay. Story time. One client that I was delighted to work with when I first met him was homeless, had minimum self-identification documents, no job, no insurance or connections to medical care providers, no access to medications that would put this individual at risk to extremely serious health consequences. When this individual was first enrolled over at Maui A.I.D.S. Foundation and because of our Bridge Program, the agency was able to supply him with medication to manage his HIV, meanwhile, enrolling him with medical insurance and linking him with a primary care provider and disease specialist. He had little belongings, clothes, and no food. Through our food pantry, he was able to feed himself. He was able to receive emergency supplies for shelter during his houselessness on a campsite through our funds. He was able to apply and then receive permanent housing assistance through our housing subsidy services, and transitioned out of homelessness. Shortly after a client was placed in permanent housing, they now work a full-time job and can commute to his work through our transportation grant monthly bus pass voucher, and received a State ID as well. Seeing this client's entire self bloom into a very charming, healthier, happier individual is why these services are so necessary. This was one client that we provided . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . for...and so many--too many--of these need these programs to survive and service our community.

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

I deeply appreciate the Council and advocating for our shared vision and goals to help our community so together that we can flourish and thrive. I believe one is none, no man left behind, together we are stronger, and changing the world starts in your backyard. I would like to request 331,000 to continue these services. Thank you so much for your time.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you very much. Any questions? Seeing none. Thank you. We like your red hair, by the way.

MS. KETCHUM: Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Next testifier.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Anna Merritt, to be followed by Susan Ellingson [sic].

MS. MERRITT: Thanks. Aloha, everybody. My name is Anna Merritt. Thanks so much for letting us have the chance to come tonight and be able to share the importance of our organizations. I am representing MEO Head Start. For you guys who don't know, Head Start is a Federally-funded program that provides preschool services to help lower income families so that their children ages three to five can go to school. It's not just free daycare. They also provide meals and we provide wraparound services that also help the family just to make sure that they're stable and can also thrive and become successful. I work as the family case manager for one of our centers, actually two, but the Kihei center across the street and also Kahului center, but that's another meeting. I have a letter here from one of our family members from this school who wanted to share her thoughts about Head Start that I'm just going to read for you guys. She says, aloha, my name is Betty Jo Sellers (*phonetic*). I am the mother of Ezekiel (*phonetic*) Sellers who attends MEO Head Start Kihei. The decision to send Ezekiel to school was tough. I endured so many emotions while making the decision. However, I'm happy that I decided to apply for the MEO Head Start Preschool Program. Everything about it was a breeze from the initial phone call, of the acceptance to his enrollment, to his transition...transition into school. It was nothing short of easy. He will soon be an alumni of the MEO Head Start Kihei Program. He has made many friends, learned a lot, and he loves it. The teaching staff, the social worker, and every person who played a role in his preschool experience is great. Although Ezekiel will be venturing off to kindergarten, I hope that MEO Head Start Program throughout Maui can continue being funded for the next school year, and years to come. The program is beneficial for both parents and children. Mahalo for your time, BJ Sellers. So, that was it. Did anybody have questions?

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Any questions for the testifier and Head Start? Thank you.

MS. MERRITT: Okay. Thanks.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Next testifier.

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Susan Ellingson [sic], to be followed by Sage Kim Seu.

MS. ELLINGWOOD: Aloha, Councilmembers. Thank you for hosting us tonight. I am Susan Ellingwood (*as spoken by testifier*). I'm the CFO for the Boys and Girls Clubs of Maui. I am representing our six operating clubhouses tonight, as well as our soon-to-be-opened Molokai clubhouse. And I wanted to offer our sincere appreciation for the funding over the years that you have provided for us to operate our safe, fun, and supportive clubhouses throughout the islands. This year, we are asking for an increase in our budget for our Maui clubhouses to help us sustain our enhanced programming in workforce development that we've established over the last year, programs that offer stipends for our members to actually explore different career opportunities, both on Maui and on other islands. And then we've also established a wellness...an emotional wellness department. And that department was...it was actually established in response to requests from our staff members to help with behavioral challenges that they were having with their...the youth members at their clubs. So, we were able to hire people, and we want to sustain that program. It is a very high priority, I think, in our community right now, especially since the wildfires. And our members have shown great progress and great response to the Emotional Wellness Program. So, we're pretty excited about that. We've also started doing 'ohana nights, inviting families to come, and our Wellness Program professionals are putting on these programs. And the families have been very appreciative of that and asking us to continue doing more of that. So, those are the types of things that we're...we're building on for our community. We are also in the process of currently hiring, onboarding, and contracting with people for Molokai to get the...get our staff hired and get cleanup and renovations done that need to be done to get that open. So, we're hoping that...for summer programming that we'll be open there. So, we're very excited about that. One of our other programs that we did not get put in the Mayor's budget this year is our Club on the Go, which is our mobile clubhouse. That...we established that in response to community requests from Hāli'imaile and Kihei to offer more after school and out-of-school-time programming for their communities. So, we were happy to be able to get that going with grants from the State. But we are also looking for...for funding to sustain the operations of our Club on the Go Program and hope that eventually we'll be able to establish some...something more permanent in Kihei, because we've been asked by the community to try to help with the growing population here. So, thank you very much for your time.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Any questions for the testifier?

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Thank you for sharing and for your work. How much are you asking for the mobile clubhouse?

MS. ELLINGWOOD: I believe it was 280,000.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: And what would that entail?

MS. ELLINGWOOD: That involves the staff. There's four staff members, three full-time...wait,

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

five staff members, three full-time and two part-time. And they operate...right now, they operate two days a week in Hāli'imaile, in Hāli'imaile Park and three days a week at the Kaiāulu O...I'm sorry, I can't remember the name of it...the workforce housing by the...by the golf course. And that would include the operations of that most...primarily for our staff who are mentoring the students there, but it also would allow us to grow that program and to offer more. The...the housing development has allowed us to bring in students from other schools as well, from other developments.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: So --

MS. ELLINGWOOD: So, it will allow us to grow that program.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: -- approximately how many children ballpark is being...and just ballpark?

MS. ELLINGWOOD: Well, we're...we're shooting for 30 in Kihei and we'd like to serve the same number in Hāli'imaile eventually. So, it would be a 60...a total of 60 students.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Okay. Thank you very much.

MS. ELLINGWOOD: Thank you.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: I'm hopeful that we can get a full-time Boys and Girls Club in Kihei. The community could use it and would very much appreciate it. Thank you.

MS. ELLINGWOOD: Thank you. Oh, Keani has a question.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo, Chair. Mahalo for your testimony --

MS. ELLINGWOOD: Thank you.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: -- Ms. Elwood [sic]. So, for Kihei, you're talking about Kaiaulu o Kupuohi?

MS. ELLINGWOOD: No, it's Kaiaulu O...

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Oh.

MS. ELLINGWOOD: It's the one by the...by the golf course. Sorry.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Yeah, I don't remember. Halele'a?

MS. ELLINGWOOD: Yes, that's the one.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Okay.

MS. ELLINGWOOD: Sorry.

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Kupuohi was the...the one that burned.

MS. ELLINGWOOD: Yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Okay. Okay. Okay. Member Cook asked about the cost...or the request for your funding for Club on the Go. But I heard you request funding for three programs under you or...

MS. ELLINGWOOD: Well, Molokai is a separate by itself.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: But you're not asking for more funding for Molokai?

MS. ELLINGWOOD: We...yes, we have --

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Okay.

MS. ELLINGWOOD: -- that is in the 2027 budget as well for the continued operations of Molokai.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: But not more funding. It's what the Mayor proposed, or more?

MS. ELLINGWOOD: Well, more funding would be appreciated because we would like to be able to provide increases for the staff over the years. We'd...we'd like to give merit increases of up to 5 percent. And if we get level funding, we probably won't be able to do that.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: So, overall, what is...what are you requesting specifically?

MS. ELLINGWOOD: For Molokai, I believe we...

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: No, no, no, not Molokai.

MS. ELLINGWOOD: Oh.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: For...like what are you asking for, for Boys and Girls Club?

MS. ELLINGWOOD: I haven't added it all up, about 1.5.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: So, you said 280 for Club on the Go.

MS. ELLINGWOOD: Yeah.

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: You said possibly 5 percent for all clubhouses. And then you were talking --

MS. ELLINGWOOD: Well...

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: -- about like an internship or like a stipend program. Did you have a specific funding request for that stipend program that you were talking about in your testimony?

MS. ELLINGWOOD: Not in the...not in the Department of Human Concerns' budget, but we are applying in the OED budget for additional funding for that.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: And that's in there?

MS. ELLINGWOOD: That's in OED. That'll be in the OED request that we haven't submitted yet. But we're looking at 100,000 for that program itself.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Okay. All right. Love your programs.

MS. ELLINGWOOD: Thank you.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Fully support it. I want to make sure that you have all the money that you...you folks need. Okay.

MS. ELLINGWOOD: Thank you so much.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo. Mahalo, Chair.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Wait, one moment. Do you get other funding besides County of Maui?

MS. ELLINGWOOD: Yes, we have...the County of Maui funds about 48 percent of our overall operations.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: And do you have a GIA grant application in with the State?

MS. ELLINGWOOD: Yes, we do.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: For how much?

MS. ELLINGWOOD: That is 800,000.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: 800,000?

MS. ELLINGWOOD: Mm-hmm.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Okay. So, we're not your only funding source. Thank you.

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

MS. ELLINGWOOD: I'm sorry. What was the question?

CHAIR SUGIMURA: We're not your only funding source.

MS. ELLINGWOOD: No, not at all. No.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you.

MS. ELLINGWOOD: Yes. Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Next testifier.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Sage Kim Seu, to be followed by Robin Garrison.

MS. SEU: Aloha. Aloha Councilmembers. Before I introduce myself, I just want to take a moment to extend a heartfelt mahalo to all of you. Your unwavering support to our organization, Maui A.I.D.S. Foundation, your continual assistance with our Ho'omana Ola free clinic, harm reduction services, and contributions to our car (*phonetic*) grant have made a difference in the lives of so many in our community. My name is Sage Kim Seu and I'm the Health Insurance Enrollment Specialist at the Maui A.I.D.S. Foundation. While my department does not receive direct funding from...from this particular grant, I do contribute in my own special way. Through the wraparound services that our amazing team here at Maui A.I.D.S. provides every day, together we ensure that every individual who comes to our doors receives the comprehensive care and support they need. Our journey with each client usually simply...begins simply with a person seeking free testing services. They set an appointment with our wonderful receptionist, Carolyn, who warmly welcomes them as they arrive at our free clinic. From that moment, the spirit of aloha is alive, setting the tone for compassionate care they will receive. Next, clients are seen by our skilled medical providers, whether it's Dr. Chin or our nurse practitioner. After testing, we do more than deliver results. We take a moment to double check whether clients have health coverage. If they don't, that's when they get referred to me for further assistance. This is where my role becomes crucial. I help them navigate through the often complex and intimidating world of health insurance enrollment. Whether it's signing them up for coverage for the first time or assisting with a change of plan, I walk alongside them every step of the way to ensure they secure the health benefits they need. Our work extends beyond just getting clients insured. Sometimes clients come to us wanting to update their information due to changes in their circumstances, like housing or income. In those cases, I'm able to access right away or connect them with Daniel, another valued member of our team, who can provide even more specialized support, in housing specifically. This coordinated approach ensures no one falls through the cracks. Every member of our team plays a key role, and all together, we cover all the bases to meet unique needs of each individual. What touches me the most deeply is experiencing this process every day. Being part of this department allows me to witness firsthand the transformation that occurs when people gain access to healthcare resources they need. It reminds me daily why I do this work. Every person who walks through our doors has a story, a

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

struggle perhaps, but also hope. Hope that they can live a healthier...healthier, fuller lives, and it's our privilege to be a part of that journey. To me, when businesses thrive, so do their employees and their neighborhoods around them. But thriving means more than economic growth. It means building a healthy community where everyone can access necessary services without barriers. When we invest in...when we invest together, we invest in a stronger, more resilient Maui. Mahalo once again for your support. Together, let us continue working hand-in-hand with aloha in our hearts to build a Maui where there is no one left behind. So nervous. I'm so sorry. I was shaking through the whole thing.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Oh, no.

MS. SEU: Thank you.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Well done. Any questions? Seeing none. Next testifier.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Robin Garrison.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Ellen, how many testifiers? If...it's...

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Three.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Three. Okay. We'll do three, and if not, we'll take a break.

MS. MCKINLEY: Next testifier...

MS. GARRISON: Aloha, beautiful people over there, speaker, Councilmembers. I'm Robin Garrison, street medicine nurse practitioner for the past five years, and we are asking for Department of Human Concerns \$188,500 line item for street medicine and peer (*phonetic*) hygiene programs for Project Vision Hawai'i. I could talk about myself all day, but I'm going to read a letter from one of my clients. I am honored to provide this testimony in strong support of Nurse Robin and her work with Project Vision Hawai'i. It is not an exaggeration to say that her care has been life-saving for my family. Her...my father is currently experiencing homelessness and lives with advanced diabetes complicated by severe diabetic ulcers. His condition requires consistent skilled medical attention, care that is extraordinarily difficult to obtain for individuals without stable housing. In the absence of traditional access points to healthcare, Nurse Robin has been the one constant. She has diligently treated his wounds, ensured he receives necessary medical attention, provided critical supplies, and facilitated essential referrals. Her care is thorough, consistent, and delivered with a level of commitment that goes far beyond expectation. What distinguishes Nurse Robin is not only her clinical excellence, but her unwavering compassion and humanity. She serves individuals who are often unseen, unheard, and passed over. Where others may look away, she leans in. She restores dignity to those who have been stripped...stripped of it by circumstance, and she does so with humility, respect, and genuine care. In Hawai'i, our communities, particular [*sic*] Native Hawaiian communities, continue to endure profound systemic health disparities. Many

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

individuals like my father are navigating complex medical conditions while also facing the realities of homelessness and limited access to care. These challenges are not isolated. They are part of a broader, deeply-rooted inequity that requires intentional compassion intervention. Nurse Robin represents that intervention. She is the bridge between vulnerability and care, between neglect and dignity, between life and loss. I offer this with complete sincerity. *(pause)* I firmly believe my father would not be alive today without Nurse Robin. Her presence, her persistence, and her compassion have made a critical and undeniable difference in his survival. Nurse Robin's work is not only simply important, it's essential. She is a lifeline to some of the most vulnerable members of our community. Continued support and funding for her work through Project Vision Hawai'i is not only justified, it is imperative. With the deepest respect and gratitude. Keawaiki Maalea *(phonetic)*. So, this is one of my clients. I obviously fall in love with my people. I've been doing this for a long time. And yeah, even Naomi from the County. . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . When we need someone, she calls me. We had someone that was in between the floods. He had a swollen leg. He...I...I thought he should go to the hospital to get IV antibiotics. He didn't want to, of course, so I ordered the antibiotics. Naomi's team bought the antibiotics. I treated him like three times a week, and two weeks later, he's walking and he's fine. So, we just do the work that we do, and thank you for continuing to support us.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Thank you for your work. Any questions? Member Paltin?

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Sorry, I had to use the restroom.

MS. GARRISON: I hope you missed that. No. . . .*(laughing)*. . .

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Was it Project Vision Hawai'i 188,500?

MS. GARRISON: Yes.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: And you're already in the budget?

MS. GARRISON: Yes, that's continued. That's continued.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: So, we just got to keep it in?

MS. GARRISON: Yes. Exactly. Yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Under Human Concerns?

MS. GARRISON: Yes.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: I...I just got the one-pager from Ms. Kauhane. That's the same one that you're talking about?

MS. GARRISON: Yes, that's the same one. Yeah.

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Okay.

MS. GARRISON: Yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Do you know what pot it would be from or...oh, okay. I'll try follow up, but...

MS. GARRISON: I just do the boots on the ground stuff. All of the administration is done by other folks, so apologies for that, yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Oh, no, no worries.

MS. GARRISON: Yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: I can...I can respond to her email and ask her, I guess.

MS. GARRISON: Perfect.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Because you're working with Ms. Kauhane, right?

MS. GARRISON: Yes.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Okay.

MS. GARRISON: Yeah. Yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you.

MS. GARRISON: Okay.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Thank you very much. Member Sinenci has a question.

COUNCILMEMBER SINENCI: Thank you, Nurse Robin, for...for all your work all these years. Just clarification, you mentioned that Naomi reached out to you?

MS. GARRISON: Yeah, she reaches out regularly. I mean she --

COUNCILMEMBER SINENCI: Regularly.

MS. GARRISON: -- if she finds someone that needs medical care, I'm the one that she calls. So, yeah, we all work together. And then, you know, the Maui A.I.D.S. Foundation, all of our community partners, we just work well together and support each other. So, yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER SINENCI: Thanks for doing that. Thank you.

MS. GARRISON: Yeah. You're welcome.

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Thank you very much for what you do. Next testifier.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Tiare Sua, to be followed by J. Kamiki Carter.

MS. SUA: Hi. Hi. You guys can hear? Sorry, I know, yeah. Don't mind me. I never write one script. I just came from Molokai. I love Mokulele. But sometimes I'm like hui. Anyhoo, I just came here to mahalo all of you for doing amazing work and trusting us and believing in our organization that we can do the work. And I also just want to say, Robin, we recognize you for all the hard work that you do and the connection that you have with Maui A.I.D.S. Foundation. Okay. So, the one thing that I'm so proud of our organization is for the past two years, for the first time, MAF has zero HIV new infections. Right? That is the power of advocacy that we provide for our community. And that is the power of what you guys do for us. That is telling our community the County got their back. Mahalo so much. The other thing, too, is about our wraparound services, especially for our harm reduction program. Sorry, I'm so nervous. Because I'm so tired.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: . . .*(inaudible)*. . .

MS. SUA: 2:00 in the morning, girl, trying to catch that flight. When we were young, how many of you or your teachers told you what you like to be when you grow up? And we was like, oh, I'm going to be one doctor. Or I like being one firefighter. A lot of these folks who are on the street never said, I want to be homeless. Or...sorry, I'm going cry. I going to try not be like Robin. Just kidding. Or they said, I'm going to be an addict when I grow up. We took away that...people stigmatize this type of substance use that these people go through. And they take away the dream. So, these people forget that...what it feels like to dream. What you guys did to...for us tells them that they can dream again. So, mahalo. . . .*(laughing)*. . . I going get emotional. Any more questions?

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Are you...are you done?

MS. SUA: I'm done.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Oh, okay.

MS. SUA: Yeah, sorry.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Any questions?

MS. SUA: I was like, oh, my God. I'm going to cry on you guys.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: I don't see any questions. Thank you.

MS. SUA: Yeah. And it's good to see you all.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Oh, there's a question.

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: We heard somebody from Maui A.I.D.S. ask for 331,000.

MS. SUA: Oh, Kellin. . . .*(laughing)*. . . Yes.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Is that in addition to what's already in there or what's already in there?

MS. SUA: What's already in there, yes.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: So...and then we heard somebody say 1.5 million cut.

MS. SUA: Oh, okay. So, the Federal Government, they posted on the Presidential's [sic] budget that they wanted to cut us 1.5 million for our Housing Program because we are a radical organization that supports gay men of color. However, the type of people we are and the community that we are on Maui, we don't care what they say. . . .*(laughing)*. . . Because somebody's still got to do the work, right? Yeah. So, we're just going to still continue, do the work. And we are so happy that you guys came through for us. So, that's why I'm here to mahalo you folks. And yeah, we're...we're not too sure what the outcome's going to be yet with this administration because it's kind of too early. Yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Okay. So, we're going to keep the lines of communication open in case you need like a budget amendment or something.

MS. SUA: Yes, please. Thank you so much.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Okay.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Any other questions? Seeing none.

MS. SUA: Yeah. Mahalo.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Next testifier.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next and currently last testifier signed up is J. Kamiki Carter.

MS. CARTER: Okay. How do I follow my cousin? She's awesome. I...I'm very thankful for all the things that you're doing within our lāhui and so proud of our ohana and all what we do. Aloha. My name is Kamiki Carter. I wear many hats within our lāhui. I'm going to start off as a Kihei member for the...community member for the last 30-plus years. Please continue to support Kihei Youth Center, MEO Head Start, MEO Bus...my turn to cry. I also wear a hat as a board member for the Maui Comic Con. That is something where we have...I'm not sure if you guys are aware of it, but the Maui Comic Con, I believe we did receive funding from you folks in previous years and that is something that eventually we'd like to get back on the agenda to possibly receiving funding to continue the free event, family event. I also am a co-founder for Maui Rapid Response. Mahalo for all of the support that you guys have been providing for Holomua Outreach, Ice Cream Aunties, Maui...Maui Medics, Loving our Lāhui...just the continuous work

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

that is partnering with people like Nurse Robin and the wonderful people within our lāhui who just supports our vulnerable population is just awesome. I also wear a hat as a Disaster Case Manager for Ho'ōla iā Mauiakama Long-Term Recovery Group, and we have so many celebrations right now. We were able to complete two haies in our Lahaina and rebuilding. We're currently in the process of rebuilding three more and hopefully done within the next...hopefully soon. I want to say by the end of the year, even sooner than that. There's just, you know, so many things that our program provides, and just, you know, mahalo for all of the support that you guys have been providing. I believe, you know, you folks are also providing funding. That's not my area. So, if you guys ask me questions, I'm going to be like, I have no idea. Just thank you, and talk to Rhonda. And...but we have our Disaster Case Management Program, which supports our homeowners to be able to rebuild. We work with them directly. We have a holistic approach, which is basically looking at what their needs are and really supporting them and...and advocating for them and hunting down funding or whatever it is. And we're fortunate to have what's called the unmet needs roundtable to be able to go and find...to share what the gap is for the families and see if we can get funded to...again, to help finish the rebuild or even starting the rebuilds. We have our volunteer services, our construction services, our Lahaina Resiliency Hub. We also have our new thing, which is our House to House Program. We just recently got our admissions adjusted to serve all disasters and not just the wildfires. And right now, we're not...we don't have any funds for that. So, I know that eventually that's something we are going to be presenting to you folks and asking for assistance for that. So, mahalo for everything that you guys have done. I'm so happy to continuously see each and every one of you present and answer our questions and even in the community. . . .(timer sounds). . . So, yay.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Tamara.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Any questions? Member Paltin?

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you, Ms. Carter. I wasn't going to ask you money amount, but you said LTRG, right?

MS. CARTER: Yes.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: . . .(inaudible). . . and like that. I just had a question. I don't know if you know the answer.

MS. CARTER: I can try.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Okay. Sometimes I hear from people rebuilding that the contractor walked away with their money. And so, now like we have to come up with more money. But I don't always hear who that contractor is. And so, sometimes I'm concerned that they're being left out in the wild to walk away with more people's money.

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

And I just was wondering, do you guys like...how come nobody puts them on blast so they don't...so they stop keep ripping off our people?

MS. CARTER: So, the people that we work with, we...you know, that's one of the questions that we ask, who is your construction person and all of that kind of stuff. Like that's...I'll just talk personally on how I would support our 'ohana. And basically, I know that there is like legal things going on. DCCA was involved, ROCA [sic] was involved, like all of those.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: RICO.

MS. CARTER: There are steps that...RICO, thank you. All of those things are in the process. And I believe...I just trust in that process. Like we're not...I don't feel like for me, I'm not that person to be able to just like...like share that. But if I do come across families or individuals, friends that are in the process of rebuilding and have certain contractors, then I'm kind of like, okay, you know, this is just a red flag, and then share with them the things that we've...we're in the process of doing. And because it's...the faulty contractor has been a huge thing. And we've been...

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: And their license too.

MS. CARTER: Correct. So, that's why the DCCA was involved in that whole process. And I'm just so grateful that that license portion is being taken care of. Because...and just...I know Maui is such a small place. But at the same time, like I think professionalism, I guess I'm going to say, like sometimes we forget like they have families too. And I just...I don't...I'm not condoning what they're doing, but when...I don't know how to explain it.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: It's hard when you hear multiple families have gotten ripped off by the same licensed contractor. And the DCCA is telling people to go to licensed contractors, when I know some unlicensed contractor that do way better work for cheaper and are --

MS. CARTER: Yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: -- in our community. So, they're not running away. That's just...I --

MS. CARTER: And I getting emotional --

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: -- we don't understand the answer --

MS. CARTER: -- because...

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: -- but that's...I don't understand it is what it's...

MS. CARTER: And I'm getting emotional because like I cannot find the words to be able to like want to...like I do want to just share and let everybody know. But it's like, that's not

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

my place. Like my place is to be...to support the families and to make sure that they're good. And it's like to leave out all that hewa and that negativity and just focus on like, okay, where are you guys now? What we going do? And, you know, can the Mennonites help since we have that support? Like we are trying so hard to be creative in supporting them and not try...like...and supporting them in like connecting them with like Pono Legal or all the...all the necessary steps that they need to do to take care of that. But also refocusing our focus to make sure that the rebuild is taken care of. I hope that answers your question.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Yeah, I understand. It's just hard when I hear each new person getting ripped off by the same --

MS. CARTER: It's...

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: -- licensed contractor. It's like, why is nobody putting an end to these guys, you know? But okay, I got it. Thanks.

MS. CARTER: That would be a great question to...to find out. I mean, on your folks, the way you guys have a lot of, you know, hey, you know, even having those conversations with our contractor, like our Contractor Manager, Brandy, like, Cajudoy, like she can talk stories with you. I know that you guys have talked stories before. So, like, she can talk stories with you in regards to like those people who are...those red flags are up and they are ripping off our lāhui.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Because plenty people post anonymously on Facebook --

MS. CARTER: Yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: -- and just saying like, give some folks a heads-up on that.

MS. CARTER: Yeah. Yeah.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Okay. Thank you.

MS. CARTER: You're welcome. Blessings.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you. Next testifier.

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, no one else has signed up to testify. Would you like me to do a brief last call?

CHAIR SUGIMURA: What did you say? I can't hear you. Oh, there's no one else?

MS. MCKINLEY: No one else has signed up to testify.

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Oh, last --

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

MS. MCKINLEY: Would you like me --

CHAIR SUGIMURA: -- last call please.

MS. MCKINLEY: -- to do...okay. If anyone else would like to testify, please come up to the microphone now...three, two, one. Chair, I don't see anyone else indicating --

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Okay.

MS. MCKINLEY: -- a desire to testify.

**. . . CLOSE PUBLIC TESTIMONY . . .**

**COUNCILMEMBERS VOICED NO OBJECTIONS.** (Excused: NUH)

**ACTION: DEFER pending further discussion.**

CHAIR SUGIMURA: Thank you, everybody, for being here. Thank you for testifying. It is now 8:10. And this meeting is now adjourned. . . .*(gavel)*. . .

**ADJOURN:** 8:10 p.m.

bfed:min:260414-South Maui:ds

Transcribed by: Daniel Schoenbeck

**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Council of the County of Maui**

**April 14, 2026**  
**Kihei Community Center, Main Hall**

---

CERTIFICATION

I, Daniel Schoenbeck, hereby certify that pages 1 through 48 of the foregoing represents, to the best of my ability, a true and correct transcript of the proceedings. I further certify that I am not in any way concerned with the cause.

DATED the 12th day of May 2026, in Wailuku, Hawai'i

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Daniel Schoenbeck", is positioned above a horizontal line.

Daniel Schoenbeck