

April 8, 2025

MEMO TO: Members of the Budget, Finance, and Economic  
Development Committee

F R O M: Yuki Lei K. Sugimura, Chair *Yuki Lei K. Sugimura*  
Budget, Finance, and Economic Development Committee

SUBJECT: **EAST MAUI RESIDENCY AREA MEETING REGARDING THE  
FISCAL YEAR 2026 BUDGET** (BFED-1)

On April 2, 2025, the Budget, Finance, and Economic Development Committee held a public meeting at Helene Hall, Hāna, regarding the proposed FY 2026 Budget. Present for the meeting were: Committee Chair Yuki Lei Sugimura, Vice-Chair Tasha Kama, and members Tom Cook, Gabe Johnson, Keani N.W. Rawlins-Fernandez, Shane M. Sinenci, and Nohelani U'u-Hodgins. The meeting started at 6:04 p.m. and adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Your Committee received oral testimony from 24 individuals. Unless otherwise indicated, the following oral testimony was received in support of funding for the organization, program, or project noted:

1. Three individuals testified in support of building a community pool in Hāna.
2. Līpoa Kahaleuahi, Executive Director, Ma Ka Hana Ka 'Ike, and six others testified in support of continued funding for the organization's educational and vocational training program.
3. Five individuals testified in support of continued funding for Maui Invasive Species Committee and ongoing invasive species mitigation efforts in East Maui.
4. Mike Opgenorth, Director, Kahanu Gardens and Preserve, and two others testified in support of continued funding for their organization's work.
5. One individual testified in support of parks upgrades and advocated for short-term rentals in Hāna.
6. Kane Kanaka'ole, Hāna Branch Manager, Maui Economic Opportunity Transportation, and nine individuals testified in support of continued funding for the organization's work in East Maui. Shanrae Ng and Earle Medeiros, Jr., MEO Transportation

drivers, also testified about the continuing need for road improvements along Hāna Highway.

7. Five individuals testified in support of paving and road improvements along Hāna Highway.
8. Two individuals testified in support of continued funding for Hāna Arts.
9. One person testified in support of the Hāna Greenway and Pathway project that the Maui Metropolitan Planning Organization has assisted with.
10. Matt Keiley, Maui County Farm Bureau member, testified in support of the Agricultural Micro Grants Program, continued funding of the Agriculture in the Classroom program for students, and the use of incarcerated individuals to assist with mitigating miconia along Hāna Highway.
11. C. Ka'uiki Lind testified in support of the Kīpahulu Community-Based Subsistence Fishing Area, affordable housing, and Kaupō road improvements, and supported the need to resolve ongoing water meter issues in Kaupō. He also submitted written testimony in opposition to the bill allowing mobile food trucks and trailers on agricultural lands.
12. Meleana Kurokawa, a Hāna resident and student, testified in support of a new public playground in East Maui for young keiki and suggested it be built near or in the yet-to-be-completed Pa'ani Mai Park in Hāna. Ms. Kurokawa also submitted written testimony.
13. Five individuals testified in support of the completion of Pa'ani Mai Park.
14. Maya Ross, Hāna High and Elementary School teacher, testified in support of continued funding for STEM Works through Maui Economic Development Board. Ms. Ross also submitted written testimony.
15. Scott Crawford, Hawai'i Farmers Union- Hāna Chapter, and three others testified in support of the special purpose revenue funding for the acquisition of land for Hāna Hub, including continued

operational funding of its shared kitchen and aggregation facility in conjunction with the University of Hawai'i Maui College.

16. One individual testified in support of continued Office of Economic Development grant funding for Hāna Canoe Club and The Kīpahulu 'Ohana.
17. One individual testified in support of continued funding for Hale Hulu Mamo, an adult day care center in Hāna. She asked for increased funding so that they could produce up to 50 bags of food a week from their current 25 bags of food a week for needy kūpuna.
18. Three individuals testified on the continued support for the East Maui traffic mitigation pilot project.
19. One individual testified in support of the County conducting a comprehensive recreation plan for East Maui in collaboration with the community.
20. One individual testified in support of the Hāna Farmers Market, facilitation of the Kawaipapa Subdivision Habitat for Humanity housing project, and for more affordable housing projects in East Maui to support local families.
21. Three individuals testified in support of funding and support to mitigate the ongoing issues with waterlines in East Maui specifically in Nahiku, Pu'uiki, and Kaupō.

Your Committee also received the attached written testimony.

For questions relating to the East Maui residency area meeting, please contact OCS staff (Keone Hurdle at ext. 7659, Megan Moniz at ext. 7145, Criselda Paranada at ext. 7668, or Yvette Bouthillier at ext. 7758).

If you have any questions relating to the FY 2026 Budget, please contact the Committee staff (Kirsten Szabo at ext. 7662, James Krueger at ext. 7761, Jarret Pascual at ext. 7141, Clarissa MacDonald at ext. 7135, or Pauline Martins at ext. 8039). Thank you for your cooperation.

C. Ka'uiki Lind

PO Box 468

Hana, HI. 96713

**April 2, 2025**

Maui County Planning Commission  
Maui County Planning Department  
Maui Nui a Kama

Dear Members of the Maui County Planning Commission,

As a Native Hawaiian and a firm believer in the preservation of our cultural and environmental heritage, I am writing to strongly oppose the proposal to allow mobile food trucks and trailers on agricultural lands in Maui County. While I understand the intention to support local farmers, this proposal, as written, poses a significant threat to both our traditional subsistence practices and the natural resources we, as Native Hawaiians, have relied on for generations.

East Maui, where I call home, is a sacred place, rich with abundant resources that sustain both our food systems and our cultural practices. The waters surrounding this land provide us with vital fish species like **moi**, **ula** (lobster), and native seaweed, all of which are deeply tied to our identity as Hawaiians. These species are not merely food; they are part of our spiritual and cultural practices that have been passed down through generations. As a result, any overexploitation of these resources—whether through increased demand from commercial food trucks or otherwise—poses a grave threat to our community's subsistence and our way of life.

East Maui is home to the highest fish biomass on Maui Island, making it essential to the sustainability of our fisheries. Allowing mobile food trucks to operate in agricultural zones—selling seafood from our local reefs—will undoubtedly increase demand on these already vulnerable fish stocks, further endangering our local marine ecosystem. It is crucial to recognize that these resources are not infinite, and overfishing could disrupt the delicate balance of our marine environment, which many of us depend on for our daily sustenance.

The **Pa'akai analysis** should be directly applied in this situation, as this proposal threatens our traditional and customary rights to access and manage our marine resources. The interests of Native Hawaiians must take precedence over commercial tourism interests. Our rights to practice subsistence fishing, gather seaweed, and uphold the traditions of our ancestors are not negotiable, and any decision that disregards this should not be made lightly.

Furthermore, the sourcing of proteins for food trucks raises serious concerns for local farmers and our subsistence practices. While seafood may be sourced locally, other proteins like chicken, lamb, pork, goat, and beef are not available through sustainable, local practices due to the lack of

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USDA-approved slaughterhouses on Maui. It is highly likely that these food trucks would source their meats from large mainland distributors or commercial outlets like Costco. This undermines the whole idea of promoting sustainable, local agriculture and directly contradicts the principles of **mālama 'āina** (care for the land) that are central to our identity as Native Hawaiians.

If food trucks are to be allowed, I propose that strict regulations be implemented to ensure that **100% of the food served must come from the farm**, thereby ensuring that these businesses support local agriculture and maintain integrity. However, I also strongly urge the Commission to consider a **special use case permit** system, where each operation would be reviewed and approved based on its alignment with the principles of sustainability, local sourcing, and cultural respect. Permits should be granted on a **case-by-case basis**, ensuring that each food truck is thoroughly vetted for compliance with the values that protect our land and waters.

Additionally, I respectfully recommend that food trucks be restricted to operating only from **one hour after sunrise to one hour before sunset**. This would help minimize disruptions to the natural rhythms of East Maui, ensuring that these businesses do not interfere with the needs of local farmers or the preservation of our environment.

As tourism continues to grow in Hana and East Maui, we must remain vigilant in protecting our lands, waters, and traditional practices from commercialization that undermines the long-term sustainability of our community. This proposal, if approved, risks turning our sacred spaces into a commercialized area that no longer reflects the values of **mālama 'āina** and **mālama kai** (care for the sea). Our lands and waters are not commodities to be exploited but precious resources that sustain our people's culture and future.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Planning Commission to reconsider this proposal and instead explore alternatives that honor our Native Hawaiian heritage, protect our environment, and ensure that our children and grandchildren can continue to live in harmony with the land and sea as we have for centuries.

Mahalo nui loa for considering my concerns.

Sincerely,  
Ka'uiki Lind

Meleana Kurokawa  
P.O. Box 422  
Hana, HI 96713  
March 7, 2025

To Whom It May Concern:

Aloha! I am writing as a concerned high school student and resident of Hana, Maui, in regards to the urgent need of a playground for our community. Hana, Kipahulu, and Keanae all currently lack a public playground for keiki who are not old enough to attend school. Additionally, the only playgrounds in East Maui that are provided on campus are outdated and pose numerous safety risks.

Playgrounds are essential for the well-being and development of children. They provide a safe environment for physical activity which is crucial for combating childhood obesity and developing skills such as: coordination, balance, muscle strengthening, and hand eye skills. Studies show that children living near parks with playgrounds have better mental health than children living near parks without playgrounds. Furthermore, playgrounds help children develop social skills, build friendships, and learn to share with others. There are also cognitive benefits of play that teach keiki problem solving skills, thinking critically, and even help with exploring cause and effect. Playgrounds positively impact emotional development by building confidence, self esteem, and even communication skills. The advantages of play are endless. Our East Maui communities currently do not have a dedicated space for these activities that would allow growth and development for our young ones.

A new playground would also serve as a place for Ohana's to come together while bringing a sense of community pride. It would provide a safe and enjoyable place for children to play and offer parents a space to socialize. Gathering parents/caregivers allows them the opportunity to support each other. This sense of community is particularly important in small towns like Hana, where social connection greatly enhances our quality of life and allows us to thrive together.

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If the Department of Parks and Recreation were able to develop Pa'ani Mai Park, Kipahulu Point Park, and Keanae Park, it would greatly enhance the well-being and healthy development for the children of our community. Not only our children but the community as a whole would benefit from a place to gather outdoors together. A playground falls clearly under your mission statement to "Provide safe, satisfying and cost effective recreational opportunities for the residents of and visitors to Maui County". I am confident that with support, we can create a space that will benefit current and future generations to come.

Mahalo for your attention to this important matter. I am looking forward to your response and sharing blueprints or ideas for the possible facilities. In the meantime I will reach out to our community and hear their opinions about my proposition. Together we can make this dream a reality for the children, families, and visitors of Hana. I have created a petition and have collected 410 amount of signatures and will continue to reach out to hana residents.

Sincerely,

Meleana Kurokawa

(808)-856-6777

[Meleanahiva@gmail.com](mailto:Meleanahiva@gmail.com)

Aloha,

My name is Maya Ross. I am a secondary teacher here in Hana at Hana High & Elementary. I was first introduced to Lalaine Pasion of STEMworks a few years ago through our school counselor. Lalaine was reaching out to Hana School for any teachers that would be interested in taking students to a young ladies' STEM based camp, called EXCITE. I am an English teacher, so it wasn't a natural choice of an educational excursion. But I thought, what a great opportunity for my students to experience and be exposed to STEM opportunities. I reached out and agreed to be a chaperone for two students. I've taken girls two summers now, and it's been transformative for our girls to experience. They are exposed to professions and areas of study they would otherwise not know about.

Lalaine has always understood and been a champion for our rural students to have these kinds of opportunities. And it isn't without the support of the Maui Economic Development Board funding these experiences for our students. Lalaine called me up in February and told me about the STEMWorks Convention that would take place on Oahu. Students from all over the state attend this major event and a lot of them compete, bringing their STEM projects with them to enter. On March 25, myself and three students woke up at 2am, drove to the airport and went to Oahu to live this experience. My students were intimidated, overwhelmed and had no idea the scale of the event. They begged for us to leave, feeling as if the other kids were smarter than them. By the end of the day, we were engaged in the break out sessions and by the next morning, my girls were excited to see the friends they made and engage further into the STEM opportunities they were given. One student wrote to me, "It made me think about college and explore my choices for a new major." She's in the 6th grade. Her classmate said it changed her life. And I can tell you it did. She had never slept away from her Papa before this trip. To see her growth in real time over the course of the two days brought me back to the reason of why I do what I do every day. A now 8th grader who I took on an Excite Camp trip wrote to me, "I always

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find myself applying what I learned at STEM in my classes. It affected my thinking about learning new subjects."

None of these experiences would be possible without the funding and support of the Maui Economic Development Board. I ask that you please consider them in your budgeting decisions as I can tell you it's created a huge impact on our students, particularly in the future of women in STEM. These grants help support outreach programs like Excite Camp and STEMworks, especially for rural areas. I pray the budget cuts does not affect our kids ability to learn beyond what our rural school can offer.