

Budget, Finance, and Economic Development Committee (2025-2027) on 2025-04-09 1:00 PM

Meeting Time: 04-09-25 13:00

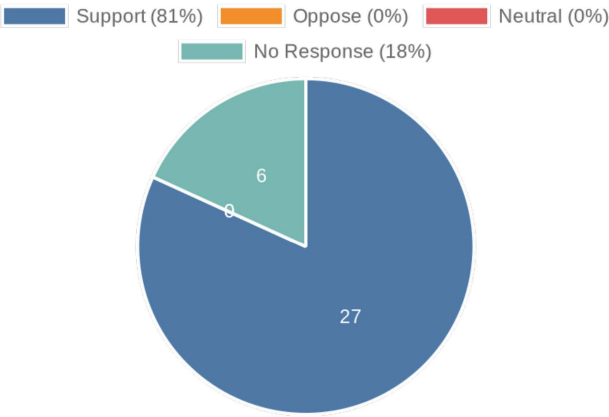
eComments Report

Meetings	Meeting Time	Agenda Items	Comments	Support	Oppose	Neutral
Budget, Finance, and Economic Development Committee (2025-2027) on 2025-04-09 1:00 PM	04-09-25 13:00	2	33	27	0	0

Sentiments for All Meetings

The following graphs display sentiments for comments that have location data. Only locations of users who have commented will be shown.

Overall Sentiment



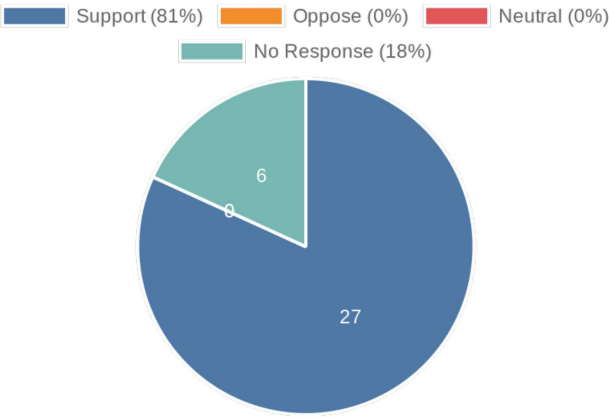
Budget, Finance, and Economic Development Committee (2025-2027) on 2025-04-09 1:00 PM
04-09-25 13:00

Agenda Name	Comments	Support	Oppose	Neutral
A G E N D A	23	18	0	0
BFED-1 Bill 41 (2025) PROPOSED FISCAL YEAR 2026 BUDGET FOR THE COUNTY OF MAUI (BFED-1)	10	9	0	0

Sentiments for All Agenda Items

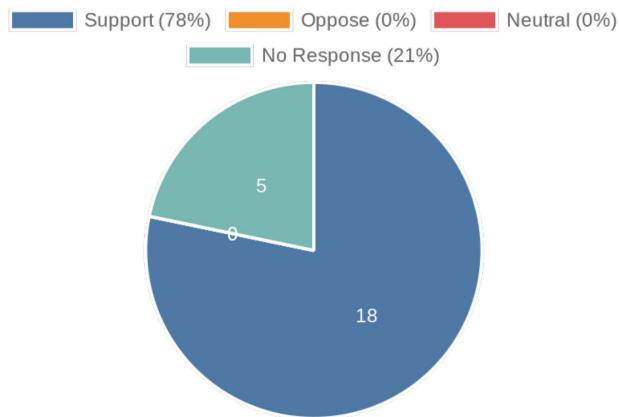
The following graphs display sentiments for comments that have location data. Only locations of users who have commented will be shown.

Overall Sentiment



Agenda Item: eComments for A G E N D A

Overall Sentiment



Guest User

Location:

Submitted At: 2:17pm 04-09-25

Please fund repairs if loa theater! They are in invaluable asset to our community ____

Guest User

Location:

Submitted At: 1:33pm 04-09-25

****Testimony in Support of Continued Funding for the lao Theater Roof Maintenance****

Aloha Members of the Maui County Council,

I'm writing in strong support of continued funding for the maintenance and preservation of the historic lao Theater, with specific attention to the much-needed roof repairs.

The lao Theater is not just a building—it is a cultural treasure and a cornerstone of our community. For decades, it has been a gathering place for residents and visitors alike, offering a stage for local talent and a platform for meaningful storytelling.

Perhaps most importantly, the lao Theater is home to the *Maui Onstage* youth program, which provides a safe, creative space for young people to learn, grow, and express themselves. The impact of this program on our youth cannot be overstated—it builds confidence, fosters teamwork, and nurtures a lifelong love of the arts.

Preserving the lao Theater ensures that we are protecting both a historic landmark and an active hub of community connection. It is a vital investment not only in our past, but in our future.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Morgan Wittmer

Guest User

Location:
Submitted At: 12:52pm 04-09-25

Hello,

As the mother of a Maui Onstage youth member for the past few years, I am writing in support of the roof repairs for the Historic lao Theater.

My daughter along with her peers are privileged to have been provided the opportunity to perform in such a historically rich and respected building.

Failure by the County of Maui to approve funding for the roof repair would be a disservice to its keiki and community that it is called to provide and protect.

Thank you
Tori Al-Hark

Guest User

Location:
Submitted At: 12:51pm 04-09-25

As a teen actor The lao Theater has become my home. It is where I found myself, made long lasting connections, and when I am happiest. Theater is who I am and not all schools have the chance of theater so we turn to the amazing lao Theater. I know I am not the only student who feels this way. The lao Theater is where we feel safe, heard, accepted. Performing is our way to give back to the community. The lao Theater has been a light in the darkest times. This theater has entertained Maui since 1928 and still has not lost any of its magic and is still inspiring people. It is an essential part to Maui. I can't imagine a world without our lao Theater.

Guest User

Location:
Submitted At: 12:29pm 04-09-25

Aloha,

I am writing in support of the necessary improvements needed to maintain the historic lao Theatre. My daughter has performed here many times and has greatly benefited and developed from her incredible experiences. She has grown in her passions for performing, acting, and dancing as a result of access to utilize this vital community hub. It is imperative to pass this funding for our keiki and future generations to come. What price tag can you put on life-changing experiences? Please pass for the sake of the keiki and vibrant community of Maui.

Mahalo,
Andrew

Guest User

Location:
Submitted At: 12:15pm 04-09-25

I am in full support of this bill to repair the historic lao Thetare. The theatre has given this community joy in times of sadness. Giving people of the island a place to go and gather to enjoy art. It provides a place of understanding for everyone from Keiki to Kapuna. It is a place where hawaiian culture and western culture can merge and entwine seamlessly. My family has benefited greatly from the enrichment our lives have garnered from the participation in events at the Theatre.

Guest User

Location:
Submitted At: 12:01pm 04-09-25

Aloha,

I am writing to express my support for the proposed \$1.2 million Capital Improvement Project allocation in the FY 2026 County budget for a new roof at the 'Iao Theater.

The community and organizations around this historic landmark are an absolute asset to Maui County. My family and I have been honored to be part of Maui OnStage, as patrons, supporters and members. The theater serves as a gathering place for our entire island community, giving opportunity to forge new friendships and connections with neighbors we might only otherwise see in passing.

The building itself provides a unique opportunity to interact with the past. The look, feel and design of 'Iao Theater is an important part of Wailuku and Maui as a whole. It is truly a special experience to be part of a living history, and 'Iao Theater provides that in ways that can't always be expressed with words. Preserving, protecting and nurturing a place that has had such a powerful impact on people's lives across generations is one of the greatest endeavors our community can do.

I know my family is enriched from our interactions and experiences at 'Iao Theater. I believe the rest of the Maui community is, too. Please fund the repairs needed for 'Iao Theater.

Mahalo,
Dylan Haymans

Guest User

Location:

Submitted At: 11:41am 04-09-25

I am writing to request your approval to repair the leaking roof of the historic 'Iao Theater. This beloved community landmark has touched the lives of many, providing a space for children to nurture their creativity and gain confidence through programs like Maui on Stage.

As a parent, I have seen firsthand how my children have flourished through their participation in these programs, and the 'Iao Theater has been a critical part of their growth. The opportunity to showcase their talents has not only enriched their lives but has also strengthened our community by fostering the next generation of leaders and artists.

The roof's current condition poses a risk to both the building's integrity and the experiences it offers. Without proper repairs, we risk losing a vital community resource that has done so much to shape and uplift the youth of Maui.

We ask for your support in ensuring the continued legacy of the 'Iao Theater, so it can remain a place where children can build their confidence, creativity, and love for the arts, all while contributing to the cultural and social fabric of Maui.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Guest User

Location:

Submitted At: 11:29am 04-09-25

Testimony in Support of Funding for the Iao Theater Roof Repair

Aloha,

I strongly support the funding needed to repair the roof of the Historic Iao Theater. This special place is a pu'u honua, a sanctuary, where our community comes together to create, learn, and grow through the arts. Generations of keiki and k_puna alike have shared stories, laughter, and inspiration within its walls.

IAO Theater offers an opportunity that builds confidence, connection, and kuleana to one another. Without this space, many would lose access to the life-changing experience of storytelling and self-expression.

Please honor the spirit of aloha and _ohana by approving the funds to restore the Iao Theater. Let us m_lama this treasured space so it can continue to uplift our I_hui for generations to come.

Mahalo nui loa.
Tiffany Aragon

Guest User

Location:

Submitted At: 11:12am 04-09-25

Please, please keep the IAO valley theater open. My 7 yr old daughter fell in love with theatre when she saw the Seussical there last year.

She is now a cast member in the Maui Onstage Magic Treehouse production and will perform there next month.

There are lots of avenues for kids who are into sports or science... clubs, schools, private, community, on and on.

But for kids who want to perform... this is it!

If they lose the Iao theater, a whole generation loses their love of the arts. Don't do that to our Keiki.

Please, keep this amazing landmark open, so we build a strong generation of artists for a bright future.

Guest User

Location:

Submitted At: 11:09am 04-09-25

The Iao Theatre is a blessing to the entire community. I absolutely would urge the funding to be approved for a new roof because this theatre is not only a historical site for Maui but one that brings in audiences even from people around the world. Being on the side of a regular attendee to the performances and also being the parent of a regular performer, Iao is a sacred place for our keiki and community.

Guest User

Location:

Submitted At: 11:02am 04-09-25

I support funding the repair and maintenance of Iao theater. This historical gem is the heart of Wailuku and performing arts on Maui. I was lucky to perform there as a child and now enjoy watching my boys do the same. It will not get cheaper to defer the maintenance and we cannot risk losing this special place. Iao theater provides a place for the Maui community to come together, celebrate the arts, create and grow our community. Please vote to repair our beloved theater.

Guest User

Location:

Submitted At: 10:55am 04-09-25

My name is Eunice Espiritu and I am testifying in support of Maui Economic Development Board's Economic Development Grant under the Maui County Office of Economic Development. MEDB has greatly expanded my knowledge over the past year. Through the program, I had the opportunity to intern at Maui Ku'ia Chocolate Factory in Lahaina during the school year, and at L_na'i City Bar and Grill over the summer. Both experiences allowed me to gain valuable hands-on skills and insight into real work environments. I'm truly grateful to MEDB for making those opportunities possible.

This program has given students like me a chance to explore what it's like to work in STEM fields. It helped us find out what we're interested in and gave us more confidence in our future careers. Keeping this program going would be very helpful. It connects students with local businesses and keeps us curious and motivated. It also gives us real-world experience early on, which is important for our growth. I believe future students will benefit just as much, and I hope MEDB continues to support and grow this program.

Thank you.

Guest User

Location:

Submitted At: 10:53am 04-09-25

I strongly support the funding dedicated to fixing the roof of the Lao Valley Theater. This much-needed repair will ensure that the theater can continue to be a vital hub for our community, providing a safe and inspiring space for children and teens to explore the arts. The theater is more than just a building; it's a place where young people can develop their confidence, hone their talents, and express themselves in ways that shape their futures. With this support, the Lao Valley Theater will remain a cornerstone of creativity and connection for generations to come. It truly serves as a testament to the power of community in fostering growth and opportunity for our youth.

Thank you,
Annie Thielen

Guest User

Location:

Submitted At: 10:45am 04-09-25

I strongly support the state funding to fix the roof at the historic Lao Theater. The Lao provides so much joy to our community and has for many years. It would be a shame to lose that opportunity to share with the next generation the legacy of the Lao Theater.

Thank you.
Lily Campbell

Christopher Garcia-Lick

Location:

Submitted At: 10:27am 04-09-25

Aloha Members of the Council,

My name is Christopher Garcia-Lick, and I am a longtime resident of Wailuku, an attorney, international legal advisor, and a proud board member of Maui OnStage, the nonprofit organization housed in the Historic Lao Theater in Wailuku.

I'm writing today in strong support of the proposed \$1.2 million Capital Improvement Project allocation in the FY 2026 County budget for a new roof at the Lao Theater.

The Lao Theater is far more than just a building—it is the cultural heartbeat of Wailuku and one of the most enduring homes of the performing arts on Maui and in Hawai'i. For nearly a century, it has welcomed generations of local artists, students, families, and audiences. It stands as a living symbol of the creativity, resilience, and spirit of our island community.

But that legacy now faces real risk. The roof has developed multiple significant leaks, and despite the tireless efforts of our exceptional staff to mitigate the damage, temporary fixes are no longer sufficient. Without this critical investment, the structure—and everything it represents—is increasingly vulnerable to permanent damage.

This funding is not just about preserving a historic landmark. It is about protecting a space where Maui's keiki, kupa, and everyone in between can continue to gather, express themselves, and connect through shared stories and culture.

On behalf of the board and the entire Maui OnStage community, mahalo for your consideration and for your continued support of this vital and irreplaceable part of Wailuku's—and Maui's—cultural landscape.

Respectfully,
Christopher Garcia-Lick
Board Member, Maui OnStage

Jessica Nelson

Location:

Submitted At: 10:26am 04-09-25

Testimony in Support of \$1.2 Million for Roof Repairs at the Historic Iao Theater

Aloha,

I am the Co-Director of Maui OnStage's Education and Youth Program. The Historic Iao Theater has been a place where our youth and teens have performed since the beginning of the program in 2013. Being able to use the Historic Iao Theater gives the children and teens in our community an opportunity to perform on a real stage with a full set, lighting, sound, etc. We are able to use the theater without an additional rental cost which allows us to offer our cast to participate in the productions FREE of charge. Without the use of the Historic Iao Theater, we would have to find another venue to perform in which would charge us high facility cost and that cost would have to be partially be funded by charging families to participate in productions. By approving the roof repair, you are helping the future of theater thrive on Maui by giving our youth and teens a place to find their passion for theater and the arts.

Guest User

Location:

Submitted At: 10:23am 04-09-25

Please prioritize funding for rental assistance in the Maui County budget. Families are struggling to afford housing, and rental assistance is a lifeline that prevents homelessness, supports local workers, and helps people stay rooted where they live, work, and raise their keiki. Please invest in programs that help keep our residents housed and our communities strong.

Mahalo for doing the right thing for our community.

- Sara

Guest User

Location:

Submitted At: 10:18am 04-09-25

Aloha Council Members,

I'd like to present my support for Maui OnStage at The Historic Iao Theater for it's proposed renovations that are so overdue for a building that carries so much historical value to Maui and its Culture. It is time we the people of Maui give this amazing gem it's rightful place as the Diamond of Maui. Let's fix The Historic Iao Theater for its History, for the Present and for the Future of preserving the arts for our community all generations to come.

With care,

Adi Ell-Ad

MOS VP Board of Directors

Guest User

Location:

Submitted At: 9:55am 04-09-25

Aloha Council members,

I'm writing today in support of the Wedding & Event Industry on Maui which is arguably one of the biggest silent drivers of our local economy. Wedding, after wedding, after wedding, we have been working and pumping tax dollars into the county. Well now we need your help. Since the fires and mixed messaging about visiting Maui, the wedding and event industry have taken a big hit, I'm a wedding photographer and business is down 40% for myself personally. It's the common story among all my colleagues. Now is the time, and we're asking for your support in the budget to promote the wedding and event industry on Maui.

Every day there are between 10-15 weddings on Maui, every single day. One wedding with 60 guests can easily generate 500K in gross income when you factor in not only all the wedding costs (which are often upwards of 100K for visitors), but the amounts paid by all their guests during their stay. One wedding easily generates 20K plus in taxes, since there are 10-15 weddings per day on Maui that is \$208,500-\$317,750 in taxes from ONE WEDDING.

We are asking for \$300K which seems like a lot, but when you look at how much money this industry brings in, the amount is a fraction and it's covered by the taxes from one wedding. There are 3,650-5,475 weddings per year on Maui. We are asking for this investment so that we can promote the industry and continue to bring in these much needed funds to our island. These are they type of visitors we want supporting the type of residents we need to keep on Maui.

I sincerely ask you to weigh in on the impact this industry brings to our island, and consider investing in us so that we can have a thriving and vibrant community.

Mahalo for your time, Tara Murphy

Luana Whitford-Mitchell

Location:

Submitted At: 7:29pm 04-08-25

Testimony of Luana Whitford-Mitchell of Maui OnStage

Guest User

Location:

Submitted At: 3:43pm 04-08-25

Aloha Council members,

I ask today that you prioritise funding for rental assistance in the County budget!

Families across Maui County are still struggling to afford housing—especially wildfire survivors and working families who are being priced out of their own communities.

Rental assistance is a lifeline that prevents homelessness, supports local workers, and helps people stay rooted where they live, work, and raise their keiki.

Please invest in programs that help keep our residents housed and our communities strong.

Mahalo for your time and service!

Kind regards,

Dale Ann Chappell

Guest User

Location:

Submitted At: 12:26pm 04-08-25

Date: [April 8,2025]

To:

Maui Economic Development Board

1305 N. Holopono Street, Suite 1

Kihei, HI 96753

Dear Maui Economic Development Board,

I am writing to extend my deepest gratitude and offer my full support for the incredible STEMworks™ programs that you continue to provide for our keiki here on Maui.

Thanks to these initiatives, my daughter Callie Jade has had the opportunity to participate in transformative educational experiences—learning from professionals, exploring real-world technology, and gaining confidence in

areas she previously only dreamed of.

One of the highlights for her was Girls Engineering Day, where she connected with other students from around the county who are passionate about STEM. The collaborative, inspiring environment helped her see herself as a future innovator, and she left more motivated than ever.

Another impactful trip for the kids? the science trip to O_ahu, where students engaged directly with STEM professionals and learned about industries and opportunities that are not readily available here on Maui. These kinds of experiences are priceless and would not be possible without the support of programs like STEMworks™.

I respectfully encourage you to continue—and expand—your funding and support for these life-changing programs. They are shaping the future of our youth, our community, and our local economy. When we invest in STEM, we’re investing in equity, opportunity, and long-term resilience.

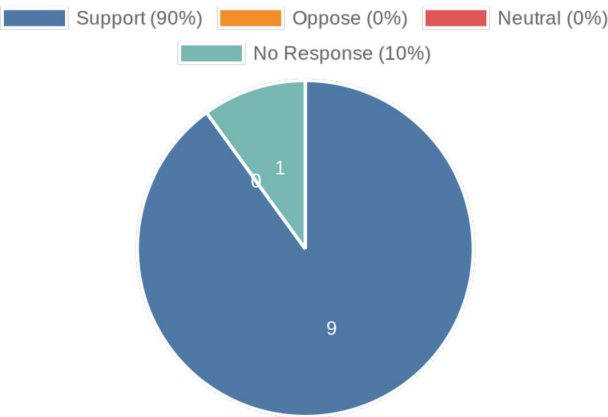
Thank you for being a vital force for progress in our community. We are so grateful for your leadership and vision.

With sincere appreciation,

Mandie Fredeluces

Agenda Item: eComments for BFED-1 Bill 41 (2025) PROPOSED FISCAL YEAR 2026 BUDGET FOR THE COUNTY OF MAUI (BFED-1)

Overall Sentiment



Guest User

Location:
Submitted At: 11:51am 04-09-25

Aloha I am Virginia Sandell. I am a business owner on Market Street. . My husband adr 45 year residents of Wailuku. The lao theater is the Grand Dame of Market Street, . Without the lao Theater I fear what Market Street would become. We as a Community need the Arts. The lao serves kids,,teens and adults. The roof really needs help. I wish you would help with the repairs. , How great would it be to have the building in great shape for the sake of Wailuku. I have been going to lao Theater for 27 years. . It brings joy to the community. Let's keep THE

IAO THEATER up and running with a new roof. All of Maui County comes to see shows. MAHALO.

Guest User

Location:

Submitted At: 10:37am 04-09-25

Aloha Chair Sugimura and Members of the Council,

My name is Christopher Garcia-Lick, and I am honored to serve on the board of Maui OnStage, the nonprofit organization housed in, and entrusted with, stewarding the Historic __ao Theater in Wailuku.

I'm writing today in strong support of the proposed \$1.2 million Capital Improvement Project allocation in the FY 2026 County budget for a new roof at the __ao Theater.

The __ao Theater is far more than just a building—it is the cultural heartbeat of Wailuku and one of the most enduring homes of the performing arts on Maui and in Hawaii. Its rich and varied history, spanning nearly a century, reflects the resilience and spirit of this island and its people. Generations of local artists, students, families, and audiences have passed through its doors. It stands today as a testament to the creative soul of our community.

But that soul now depends on urgent care. The roof has multiple serious leaks, and while our exceptional staff does everything they can to mitigate the damage, temporary fixes are no longer enough. Without this vital funding, the structure—and all it represents—is at real risk.

This investment is not just about preserving a historic building. It's about ensuring that Maui's keiki, k_puna, and everyone in between continue to have access to a space where stories are shared, voices are heard, and culture is kept alive.

On behalf of the board and the entire Maui OnStage community, mahalo for considering this important funding. Your support helps protect a place that continues to inspire, educate, and unite.

Respectfully,

Christopher Garcia-Lick

Board Member, Maui OnStage

Christina Kailiponi

Location:

Submitted At: 10:36am 04-09-25

Aloha! My name is Christina Kailiponi and I am the Co-Director of the Maui OnStage Education and Youth Theatre Program. I am writing in support of funds to repair the roof of the Iao Theatre on Market Street. As you are aware the Iao Theatre is an historical landmark in Wailuku town. As a youth organization with produce 3 youth theatrical productions every year. Each production has approx 35 island keiki ranging in age of 6 to 17 participating at no cost to them and their families. Our children are always very excited to visit the theatre and perform on stage there. We also host visiting elementary school children who come on field trips to see our shows. Part of our rehearsal process is discussing the historical significance of the building and why it is important to take care of her. She's almost 100 years old! Our children know that it's important to care for the space and respect the theatre by cleaning up after themselves. I would love to be able to share with our students that the County of Maui feels the same way and wants help fix her roof. Many of our students see the Iao as a safe and judgement free zone, I am thankful that this is being proposed in the budget and will be forever grateful to have the Iao leak-free for generations to come. Mahalo nui Loa!

Andrea Finkelstein

Location:

Submitted At: 10:21am 04-09-25

Testimony in Support of Additional Funding for the Lao Theater Roof Replacement Project

Aloha Chair and Council Members,

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony today. I'm writing in support of the Lao Theater, a treasured historic and cultural landmark in Wailuku, to express our sincere gratitude for your ongoing support — and to respectfully ask for your consideration of additional funding to support the re-roofing of the theater.

The Lao Theater has served Maui's community for a century as of next year, providing a stage for countless stories, songs, and shared experiences. It is more than just a building, it's a home for local performers, a place for youth to discover the arts, and a cornerstone of Wailuku's revitalization and identity.

Over the years, the theater has aged, and its roof is now in critical condition. We have done our best to manage the situation with temporary solutions: patchwork repairs, strategically placed buckets to catch rainwater, and volunteers showing up with mops after every heavy storm. While these measures have helped us stay afloat, they are no longer sustainable — and they place our performers, audiences, and historic interior at risk every time it rains.

The roof replacement project will be complex, multi-phased, and very costly. But it is essential. The funding already allocated is an incredible step forward, and we are deeply grateful for it. However, due to the scope of the work, increasing material and labor costs, and the historical preservation standards we must meet, additional funding would go a long way in ensuring this project is completed properly, safely, and without further delay.

We respectfully ask the Council to consider increasing the allocation for the Lao Theater roof project. Any additional support you can provide would make a tremendous difference. Not just to the physical structure, but to the future of the arts on Maui. Every dollar invested into this project protects not only a building, but a space where our community can continue to gather, create, and thrive.

Mahalo for your time, your leadership, and your continued support of the Lao Theater.

With appreciation,

Andrea Finkelstein, Maui OnStage Board Member, Kahului Resident

Dennis Mitchell

Location:

Submitted At: 10:13am 04-09-25

Testimony in Support of Roof Repairs for the Historic __ao Theater

Aloha Chair and Members of the County Council,

My name is Dennis Mitchell, I am a Wailuku resident and I volunteer with Maui OnStage at the Historic __ao Theater, mostly helping out with set construction and general building maintenance. I'm here today to ask for your support of the proposed \$1.2 million in funding for critical roof repairs to this nearly 100-year-old building.

The __ao Theater is a major part of Wailuku's history and a cornerstone of the arts here on Maui. Built in 1931, it's one of the last remaining historic theaters in the state, and it's still going strong—thanks in large part to the dedication of the community and a lot of volunteer hours.

I've spent countless weekends working behind the scenes—literally—helping to build sets, repair walls, and patch things up just to keep the place running. But the roof is well beyond patch jobs. It leaks during heavy rains, and every time that happens, we're risking damage not just to the building itself, but to the lighting, sound equipment, costumes, sets, and the safety of everyone inside.

Maui OnStage, a small nonprofit with deep roots in our community (in existence since 1931), works tirelessly to keep this historic venue active and accessible. We offer affordable performances, youth education programs, and a stage for local artists and organizations. But we cannot tackle a repair of this magnitude alone.

This funding would go a long way toward protecting the theater and allowing us to focus on what really

matters—supporting the arts, providing opportunities for local talent, and keeping this special place alive for future generations.

I respectfully ask that you approve this important investment in preserving a vital piece of Maui's history and community life.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Guest User

Location:

Submitted At: 10:11am 04-09-25

aloha,

I am Kristi Scott resident of Maui.

The Historical 'Iao Theater is an iconic landmark for the town of Wailuku. This building has been an important part of the history of Maui from the early movies, to being a shelter and now housing a place for Maui communities to meet, perform, talk story, learn from Keiki to Kapuna. This building must continue, For the continued safety of the building and the community that uses please vote yes to the funds to repair the roof.

Mahalo

Shane Borge

Location:

Submitted At: 9:54am 04-09-25

Aloha esteemed Committee,

My name is Shane Borge and I am a local boy from Ha'iku who currently lives in Waikapu. I am a performing artist and also the current sitting president of the Board of Directors for Maui Onstage. I am writing to you all today to speak about the importance of the 'Iao Theater and its nearly 100-year history in Wailuku. For generations, this iconic venue has been a cornerstone of our community—a place where keiki (children) and kupuna (elders) alike have gathered to celebrate the arts, share in the magic of storytelling, and create lasting memories. It has been a beacon of culture and creativity in Wailuku, and it continues to inspire all who step through its doors.

Growing up, the 'Iao Theater was always a staple in my life. Whether it was a school performance, a community theater production, or a concert, the theater has provided countless opportunities for people of all ages to connect with the arts. It has been a space where aspiring performers could find their voice, where families could bond over a shared experience, and where the spirit of Aloha was brought to life on stage. Over the last 15 years, Maui OnStage has been privileged to call the 'Iao Theater home. We've witnessed firsthand how this historic venue has become even more vital to our community, drawing in people from all walks of life—many of whom have never set foot inside before. But as we've continued to nurture the arts in this beloved space, it has become abundantly clear that maintaining a theater of this magnitude is no small feat. As a non-profit organization, Maui OnStage cannot bear the full responsibility of keeping the theater open and operational without significant support from our community, local businesses, and patrons.

The 'Iao Theater is more than just a building—it is a symbol of Wailuku's rich history and cultural legacy. It is a hub for the arts, a place where young performing artists can learn, grow, and be inspired. It is a gathering place for the Maui community, where people come together to celebrate not just theater, but the values that make our island special: creativity, collaboration, and the spirit of community. We must continue to preserve this treasure for future generations. Maui OnStage is committed to ensuring that the 'Iao Theater remains a vibrant, thriving space for the arts for many years to come. We believe in its potential to inspire young performers, to connect people through shared artistic experiences, and to continue to serve as a cultural cornerstone in Wailuku. But we cannot do it alone. We need the continued support of our community to ensure the future of this remarkable theater. Together, we can ensure that the 'Iao Theater remains a lasting part of Wailuku's history, and a place that will continue to inspire and enrich the lives of our children, our families, and our island community for generations to come.

Mahalo nui loa,

Shane Borge

Rita Whitford

Location:

Submitted At: 9:33am 04-09-25

Hello, my name is Rita Whitford, I am 84 yrs old and I live on Malaihi Road in Upper Waiehu. I have been involved in theater for 50 years, Maui Youth Theater (MAPA), Baldwin Theater Guild BTG, Maui Community Theater. I am here to speak on behalf of roof repair to the Historic Iao Theater in Wailuku.

For info, Iao Theater was built in 1928 as a movie theater. There were 7 theaters in town but only Iao remains. It hosted not only movies, but vaudeville shows, concerts, USO shows hosted by Bob Hope, Frank Sinatra's opening of his movie "From Here to Eternity" and many other notables throughout the years. Maui Community Theater or as it is known nowadays as Maui On Stage took up residence in 1984 when its home, Old Territorial Bldg on the Maui Fairgrounds was burned down by an arsonist in 1984.

The only full-time staff member is Luana Whitford-Mitchell, so when it rains, she and her volunteer husband and son put the buckets in the spots of the theater known to leak, and there are many. Then they have to dump out the water collected and replace them. The roof had been replaced in 1994 by Hans Riecke. This predicament affects the audience seating in the theater as well as the actors on stage.

I am heartily in favor of repairing or replacing the roof since the County of Maui owns the almost 100 year old historic building.

David Negaard

Location:

Submitted At: 9:18pm 04-08-25

Aloha esteemed chair,

I am David Negaard, a resident of Wailuku and high school teacher at H.P. Baldwin High School. I am also a theatre artist (performance, production, design) and a member of the Maui OnStage board of directors.

The Maui OnStage Executive Director, Luana Whitford-Mitchell, informed us of the possibility that a capital improvement project (CIP) to remediate the Historic Iao Theater could be a budget item for 2026 and onward. I strongly support such action; the Historic Iao Theater is a gem on Market Street that has been a haven for me for almost 13 years, and Luana and the Board of Directors strive to be a good steward of the building where we make magic for our community. We are developing ways in which we can better serve more members of our community in the Iao: we already operate a thriving Education and Youth program, a strong adult theatrical program, and rentals for and partnerships with arts organizations from dance studios to halau. We hope to do more FOR more in the years to come.

We are grateful to have such a beautiful and storied space in which to do our work, and want to see her flourish as she moves into her second century (she turns 100 in 2028). But as one might expect after 97 years, she is in need of support (a "lift") that is beyond the current means of our tiny non-profit. A CIP to address some of the physical challenges that an historic edifice inevitably faces is an investment in arts by and for Wailuku and Maui residents.

A commitment on the part of the county—to address the Iao's physical needs—serves the patrons who come to participate in theatre, dance, story, and culture, as audience or participants, by ensuring their aesthetic experience, comfort, and safety.

We love this historic gem in the heart of Wailuku, and I strongly urge you to support her and ensure her presence for generations to come.

Mahalo,

Luana Whitford-Mitchell

Location:

Submitted At: 7:26pm 04-08-25

Testimony by Luana Whitford-Mitchell of Maui OnStage



April 8, 2025

Testimony in Support of \$1.2 Million for Roof Repairs at the Historic Iao Theater

Submitted by: Luana Whitford-Mitchell, Executive Director, Maui OnStage

Aloha Chair and Members of the Budget, Finance and Economic Development Committee,

My name is Luana Whitford-Mitchell, and I am the Executive Director of Maui OnStage, a nonprofit community theater that has called the Historic Iao Theater home since 1984. I have had the honor of serving in this role for over five years—and it is a deeply personal one. My mother, Rita Whitford, held this same position back in the 1970s and 80s. It is a profound privilege to carry on her legacy in this space that has meant so much to our family, and to our island.

I am writing today in strong support of the \$1.2 million included in the Mayor's proposed FY2026 budget to begin the urgently needed repairs to the roof of the nearly 100-year-old Historic Iao Theater.

Maui OnStage has loved every minute of being in Wailuku town. Over the past four decades, we have welcomed thousands of audience members, performers, students, and families through the doors of the Historic Iao Theater. Each year, Maui OnStage welcomes over 15,000 patrons to our productions, events, and educational programs. This space is more than just a performance venue—it is a place of connection, education, healing, and creativity. The Iao Theater is the beating heart of Wailuku's arts and cultural identity.

For nearly a century, four generations of Maui families have gathered at the Historic Iao Theater to watch movies, listen to music, enjoy plays, and participate in pageants, award ceremonies, and other community celebrations. It is a space full of shared memories, local stories, and cultural experiences that unite us across time.

Preserving the Historic Iao Theater is not just a professional duty for me—it is a personal **kuleana**. The reason Maui OnStage even exists in this space is because we lost our original home at the Old Kahului Fairgrounds to arson in 1984. Out of that loss came a new beginning here at the Iao Theater. We know all too well what it feels like to lose a beloved venue. That experience fuels our deep commitment to protect and care for this one.

When the Lahaina wildfires devastated our island in August 2023, collectively we lost so many historic buildings—irreplaceable pieces of Maui’s cultural and architectural legacy—forever. Although the Historic Iao Theater was not physically affected by the fires, the disaster was a wake-up call for all of us. It reminded us how fragile these treasured historical places are, and how urgent it is to care for what we still have.

It is our collective **kuleana** to protect and preserve what remains. The Historic Iao Theater is one of the last of its kind, and it belongs to *all* of us—our keiki, our kupuna, our community. Investing in its preservation now is not just about fixing a roof; it is about safeguarding a space that brings us together, supports local artists and small businesses, and keeps the spirit of Maui’s history alive for future generations.

On behalf of Maui OnStage, I respectfully urge you to support the proposed \$1.2 million allocation for the Iao Theater roof repair. Let us honor what we’ve lost by caring for what remains.

Mahalo for your time, dedication, and service to our community.

With heartfelt gratitude,

LUANA WHITFORD-MITCHELL

Executive Director, Maui OnStage

Historic Iao Theater, Wailuku, Maui