

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE

Council of the County of Maui

MINUTES

January 26, 2026

Online Only via Teams

CONVENE: 9:02 a.m.

PRESENT: VOTING MEMBERS:

Councilmember Shane M. Sinenci, Chair
Councilmember Gabe Johnson, Vice-Chair
Councilmember K. Kauanoë Batangan, Member
Councilmember Tom Cook, Member
Councilmember Alice L. Lee, Member (Out 11:10 a.m.)
Councilmember Tamara Paltin, Member
Councilmember Keani N.W. Rawlins-Fernandez, Member
Councilmember Nohelani U‘u-Hodgins, Member (In 9:17 a.m.)

EXCUSED: VOTING MEMBERS:

Councilmember Yuki Lei K. Sugimura, Member

STAFF:

Clarissa MacDonald, Legislative Analyst
Ellen McKinley, Legislative Analyst
Megan Moniz, Legislative Attorney
Criselda Paranada, Committee Secretary
Lei Dinneen, Assistant Clerk
Ryan Martins, Council Ambassador

Residency Area Offices

Christian Balagso, Council Aide, West Maui Residency Area Office
Roxanne Morita, Council Aide, Lāna‘i Residency Area Office
Keomailani Hirata, Council Aide, Molokai Residency Area Office
Mavis Oliveira-Medeiros, Council Aide, East Maui Residency Area Office
Chaelin Ryu, Council Aide, South Maui Residency Area Office

ADMIN.:

Jessica Crouse, Acting Director, Department of Human Concerns (All)
Yukari Murakami, Deputy Corporation Counsel, Department of the Corporation Counsel (All)

OTHERS:

Bevanne Bowers, Executive Director, Maui Mediation Services (WASSP-1(15))
Ernest DeLima, Deputy Chief Court Administrator, Second Circuit Court (WASSP-1(15))
Malia Ferreira, Assistant Court Administrator, Second Circuit Court (WASSP-1(15))
Keala Kaopuiki-Santos, Project Manager, Office of Wellness and Resilience, Office of the Governor, State of Hawai‘i (WASSP-1(15))
Scott Watanabe, Acting Interim Managing Attorney, Legal Aid Society of Hawai‘i (WASSP-1(15))
Deb Marois, Coordinator, Ho‘oikaika Partnership (WASSP-1(16))

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

January 26, 2026

Cayla Kutaka, Program Director, Parents and Children Together (WASSP-1(16))
Danielle Egeberg, Friends of the Children's Justice Center of Maui (WASSP-1(16))

Testifiers

Kristin Mills, Member, Ho'oiikaika Partnership (WASSP-1(16))
James Langford (WASSP-1(16))

(35+) additional attendees

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

CHAIR SINENCI: . . .*(gavel)*. . . Aloha kakahiaka kākou. Welcome. Will the WASSP Committee meeting of Monday, January, 26, 2026, please come to order. It is 9:02. I'm Shane Sinenci, your Committee Chair. Mahalo, Members, for joining us this morning. And just for...as a reminder for members of the public to please silence your cell phones or any noise-making devices. Members, in accordance with the Sunshine Law, if you're not in the Council Chamber, please identify by name who, if anyone, is in the room, vehicle, or workspace with you today. And minors do not need to be identified. Please see the last page of the agenda for information on meeting connectivity. Joining us this morning, we have Committee Vice-Chair Gabe Johnson. Aloha kakahiaka.

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Aloha and good morning, Chair, Councilmembers, community members. There's no testifiers here at the Lāna'i District. I'm alone on my side of the office, and it's a beautiful day where the birds are singing and the dogs are snoring. So, I'm here and ready to work, Chair.

CHAIR SINENCI: Great. Mahalo for joining us this Monday morning. Also joining us in the Chambers, we have Member Kauanoē Batangan. Aloha and good morning.

COUNCILMEMBER BATANGAN: Aloha. Good morning, Chair.

CHAIR SINENCI: Also joining us this morning in the Chambers, we have Member Tom Cook. Aloha kakahiaka.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Aloha kakahiaka. Good...and looking forward to your meeting. There's currently no testifiers in Kihei, but our Staff is there. Thank you.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo for joining us. We're still waiting on Chair Lee, who'll join us in a little bit. Also in the Chambers, we have Councilmember Tamara Paltin. Aloha kakahiaka.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Aloha kakahiaka kākou.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo. Also...oh, online we see Member Keani Rawlins-Fernandez. Aloha kakahiaka ia 'oe.

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

January 26, 2026

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Aloha kakahiaka kākou, mai Molokai Nui a Hina. I'm at my private residence, alone here. There are currently no testifiers at the Molokai District office. Mahalo, Chair.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo for joining us. Member Yuki Lei Sugimura is excused this...for this morning's meeting. And we'll also await Member U'u-Hodgins, she'll join us in a little bit. From the Department of Human Concerns, we have Ms. Jessica Crouse, Acting Department Director, and she'll be joining us for the second item...first item? Both. Okay. From the Department of Housing, we have Ms. Cassie Yamashita, our County Housing Program Administrator. Joining us also this morning from the Council floor, we have Ms. Murakami, our Deputy Corporation Counsel. Good morning.

MS. MURAKAMI: Good morning, Chair.

CHAIR SINENCI: Morning. And our Committee Staff members helping to conduct this morning's meeting, we have Ms. Criselda Paranada, aloha; Ms. Clarissa MacDonald, good morning; Ms. Ellen McKinley; Ms. Megan Moniz; Ms. Lei Dinneen; and Ms. Jean Pkipala. Welcome, everyone. Members, on today's...item...we have two items. An Update on the [sic] Eviction Mediation and Related Social Services, WASSP-1(15). And our second item, Child Abuse and Human Trafficking Prevention in Maui County, WASSP item 1(16). Members, without objection, the WASSP-1(15), I will be...designated the following as resources under Rule 18(A) of the Rules of the Council because of their expertise on the eviction mediation process and State's upcoming pilot project. We have Ms. Bevanne Bowers, Executive Director of Maui Mediation Services; Mr. Ernest DeLima, Deputy Chief Court Administrator for the Second Circuit; Ms. Malia Ferreira, our Assistant Court Administrator; Ms. Keala Kaopuiki-Santos, the Project Manager, Office of Wellness and Resilience, Office of the Governor; and Mr. Scott Watanabe, Acting Interim Managing Attorney, Legal Aid Society of Hawai'i. For WASSP-1(16), without objection, I will designate the following as resources under Rule 18(A) because of their expertise on child abuse and human trafficking prevention in Maui County. We have Ms. Deb Marois, Coordinator of Ho'oiikaika Partnership; and Cayla Kutaka, the Program Director for Parents and Children Together. Any objections, Members?

COUNCILMEMBERS: No objections.

CHAIR SINENCI: Thank you. We can begin--oh, I do see Chair Lee. Aloha kakahiaka.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Aloha, Chair.

CHAIR SINENCI: Thanks for joining us. Let's begin with public testimony. Do we have anyone to provide testimony?

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, no one has yet signed up for...to testify at the beginning of the meeting.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay, let me know, and then I can go through the...the summary.

MS. MCKINLEY: Would you like to close testimony for the beginning of the meeting, Chair?

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

January 26, 2026

CHAIR SINENCI: Sure. Anyone wishing to provide testimony? You want to do a countdown?

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, since no one is signed up to testify...if anyone would like to testify, please come to the podium or raise your hand on Teams. The countdown is three, two, one. Seeing none. Chair, no one has indicated they'd like to testify at this time.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay.

. . . CLOSE PUBLIC TESTIMONY AT BEGINNING OF MEETING . . .

CHAIR SINENCI: Let's proceed with our first agenda item.

ITEM 1(15): UPDATE ON EVICTION MEDIATION AND RELATED SOCIAL SERVICES

CHAIR SINENCI: Members, today's first item is an Update on Eviction Mediation and Related Social Services. You know, we're happy to hear that the FEMA extension will be for another year. Mahalo for that. However, many of our Maui County residents still experience housing insecurity. And so, last year, the Committee discussed Act 202's implementation following the end of Maui Island's eviction moratorium. Act 202 started on February 5th, 2025, and established a free State-funded mediation-based process for resolving rent disputes between landlords and their tenants before going to court. This year, a new program takes effect. On February 25th, 2026, Act 278 will begin. It establishes a two-year pilot program that also requires mediation between landlords and their tenants before eviction proceeds for nonpayment of rent. Copies of Acts 202 and 278 are available on Granicus. Members, prior to Act 202's implementation, the Committee invited representatives from Maui Mediation Service, the Office of Wellness and Resilience, and the Legal Aid Society of Hawai'i to discuss the process. We've invited them back today, along with judiciary representatives, to share their experience with Act 202, and also to inform the public on what is expected with the new pilot program. So, with that, let's begin with Ms. Bowers from Maui Mediation Services. Thank you for joining us.

MS. BOWERS: Aloha and...aloha and good morning, Chair --

CHAIR SINENCI: Morning.

MS. BOWERS: -- Sinenci. And aloha and good morning, esteemed Members of this Committee. My name is Bevanne Bowers, and I am the Executive Director of Maui Mediation Services, and I appreciate the opportunity to address you this morning. The Act 202 eviction prevention program became effective February 5th of 2025, and established a mediation-based prerequisite to eviction proceedings for nonpayment of rent on Maui Island following the 2023 fires. Under the Act, landlords were required to provide written notice of intent to evict to both their tenant and Maui Mediation Services on the

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

January 26, 2026

same day. Tenants then had 15 days from receipt of the notice to request mediation. If mediation was requested, eviction proceedings were paused...and if not, landlords could proceed with filing for eviction. From February 5th through December 31st, 2025, 653 Act 202 cases were opened. Of those, 336 cases proceeded to mediation. And 80 percent of the mediated cases resulted in an agreement between the landlords and their tenants. This means in 80 percent of the cases, the tenants, their children, kūpuna, no longer faced the agonizing fear of losing their home and an uncertain future. These out . . . *(inaudible)*. . . of mediation in resolving rent disputes and preventing displacement for households facing imminent eviction. Cases that did not mediate included instances where tenants declined mediation or could not be located. They might have missed the deadline. The landlords might not have shown up, or in 113 of the cases, the matter resolved prior to mediation. Perhaps the tenants were able to come up with the past-due rent. Also during this period, 232 lead tenants requested mediation...lead meaning it was their name on the lease. Of those, 129--more than half--were impacted by the 2023 Maui wildfires through loss of housing, employment, or related hardships. Additional data shows that 166 lead tenants were four months or more behind in rent. 104 cases involved households of three to five people, yet only 13 tenants reported receiving rental assistance. Act 202 sunsets on February 5th, 2026, and will be immediately replaced by Act 278...a similar, but Statewide measure. A key difference under Act 278 is a reduced tenant response period, requiring tenants to request mediation within ten days of receiving notice, or the landlord will be able to pursue the eviction process. A PowerPoint and flyers just last week were finalized for circulation. And following this morning's session, I would like to email it to the Members of this Committee to have as a resource. Again, mahalo for your time and your concern.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Ms. Bowers. Members, any clarifying questions for Ms. Bowers? Member Paltin.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Do you have that data as well, as part of the presentation link?

MS. BOWERS: . . . *(inaudible)*. . . I have a summary that's outlining those that were impacted, and how various levels of household income, the monthly rent that was being paid, the number of persons in the household, and the months behind in rent. So, I can provide all of that for the Committee.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you. And I...I did want to clarify, when you said 80 percent of the...those that went to the mediation came to an agreement, what about the other 20 percent when they don't come to an agreement? Then they become evicted?

MS. BOWERS: If they're unable to come to a mediation agreement, the landlord does have the option of going with the next step in trying to secure a judgment in their favor where they gain possession of the property, which is why...but I'll...let me step back. The 80 percent, I believe, is so important because often times, these landlords and tenants didn't even have an opportunity to sit down and talk to one another. And also, there was a breakdown in the communication. Which is why going forward with Act 278, it is key that we get the word out to our community, especially with the time being

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

January 26, 2026

shortened by five days...the short answer to your question is, yes, then they can be...face immediate action.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: And for the 336 that reached out for mediation, you had enough resources to support everybody that reached out? Would you have the capacity if the entire 653-ish had reach out?

MS. BOWERS: We did indeed make plans, Councilmember, to be able to accommodate bringing in extra resources. We realize the importance of dealing with this in a timely manner. Because had we not, that would give the landlords an even greater weapon. Because it would be a weaponization, so we stayed on top it. And oftentimes, we have the support of our judges. Because if a tenant did find themselves in court and requested mediation, many times they would be re-referred.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR SINENCI: Chair Lee?

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Thank you. Good morning, Judge Bowers. I was wondering, when you mentioned households, did you also mean residential programs, such as the shelter, Aloha House...other places?

MS. BOWERS: When we were mentioning households, if they were living in the shelter, we recorded their residence. We did not have anyone coming from residential programs, but yes, indeed, from a shelter. Because oftentimes, there were rent payments that were required.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay. Thank you.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Mahalo, Members. Next...thank you for that information. Online, we have Mr. DeLima and Ms. Ferreira from the Judiciary, if they had any opening comments at this time?

MR. DELIMA: Aloha, Chair Sinenci. Thanks for the opportunity for us to provide you with some information about the court side in relation Act 278. So, currently, Statewide, the Judiciary is working on updating its website and documents in relation to the unpaid rent complaint for...for Act 278. We also have some other processes that we're working on...basically notice to the parties, and some other supplemental documents that are going to be available...both online, as well as in-person if they choose to come to the courthouse here to pick up those documents. We anticipate that those things are going to be available February 4th through the Judiciary's website, and here in-person, as well at the Service Center for parties who may feel it's necessary to utilize Act 278. You know, and...and as we've gone through Act 202, we have some familiarity with the process. So, our courts are familiar with how to, you know, kind of roll this out in the most appropriate way. We are obviously working with Bevanne at Maui Mediation Services, and throughout the State, Judiciary is working with the various mediation services on the different islands to implement Act 278 as well. So, I think that's

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

January 26, 2026

primarily the information that we have at this time. If you're interested, we can definitely send you those documents as we complete them so that you have...you have that information as well. We'd be definitely willing to share that with you if you...if you think that would be appropriate. Mahalo.

CHAIR SINENCI: Yes. Mahalo, Mr. DeLima. Thank you for that. The Chair would like to recognize Member U'u-Hodgins. Aloha and welcome.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Aloha, Chair. Thank you.

CHAIR SINENCI: Uh-huh. Okay. Next, Members, we have Ms. Kaopuiki-Santos from the Office of Wellness and Resilience. Is there anything that you'd like to share with us this morning?

MS. KAOPUIKI-SANTOS: Aloha mai kākou. I...I believe Ms. Bowers and that Mr. DeLima shared all of the data and the information regarding Act 278. Our office really became involved with Act 202 because as the Governor's eviction moratorium was ending, we were asked to work with the Judiciary and the Governor's Housing Office to disseminate information to the community about the changes. So, we'll go ahead and work with Maui Mediation again to share out the...the different PowerPoint presentation information that Ms. Bowers has created to share with the public. We'll...we have a biweekly meeting with folks that work directly with survivors in the community, and we'll get information out via those channels as well. And just want to thank, again, the Judiciary and Maui Mediation for their support of our community during this time. Mahalo.

CHAIR SINENCI: All right. Mahalo, Ms. Kaopuiki-Santos. Members, we also have Mr. Watanabe from the Legal Aid Society of Hawai'i, and so he's available. If you have any opening comments?

MR. WATANABE: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and...and Committee Members. I...I think that Ms. Bowers has spoken to the majority of the issues that concern us. One of the major concerns that we do have at Legal Aid Society is making sure that our tenants understand that timeline of ten days. Unfortunately, we see a lot of times where they'll get a 45-day notice, and we won't hear from them until day 42. So, it's very concerning for us that we've gone from what normally would be 15 days under Act 202, now we're down to 10 calendar days. So, it does concern us that...that our...our clients understand that that ten days is a hard line for them. If they don't make it within that timeline, they don't get this option working for them any longer. Additionally, you know, I have a little bit of concern about getting things done within the 30 days after notification from Maui Mediation, simply because hopefully, they'll be able to get everybody in the doors. But we know that there are a lot of people out there that have back rent due, so we do have some concerns that...that things are going to pick up, and we're going to see a lot more of these cases over the coming months. But we do think that this is a good opportunity for our tenants, as it does create a little bit of a buffer zone for them to be able to start looking for new housing instead of possibly looking at a writ of possession within a week if they can't make the rent trust fund payments.

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

January 26, 2026

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Mahalo, Mr. Watanabe. We have a clarifying question from Member Paltin.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: How do you count the ten days? Is it ten days from the date of the written notice of eviction, or ten days from the end...the 45 days?

MR. WATANABE: So...so, under Act 278, it's the day it's posted at the residence, or it's two days after the postmark date if it's put into the mail. So, that...that timer is going to start ticking off immediately. Additionally, we do have some concerns about tenants who might have a posting on their door and may miss a couple of days if they're not home necessarily...so that is a concern also. So, that...that timeline is very short.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: And...and would it apply also to FEMA?

MR. WATANABE: The...the FEMA housing contracts are completely different. So, they're under completely different rules than you're going to see here with...with 278. In fact, in a lot of the FEMA direct housing contracts, unfortunately the clients don't have the normal tenant rights as they would if they were directly leasing from a landlord.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you.

MR. WATANABE: Um-hum.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay, Members. Thank you for all that...all that information. Before...before we begin our discussion, let's take testimony for WASSP-1(15). Ellen?

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, no one has signed up to testify on this item. If anyone would like to testify, please come to the podium or raise your hand on Teams. The countdown is three, two, one. Chair, seeing no one indicating to testify on this item. Thank you.

CHAIR SINENCI: Thank you. Members, any objections to closing public testimony for this item?

COUNCILMEMBERS: No objections.

CHAIR SINENCI: Thank you.

. . . CLOSE PUBLIC TESTIMONY FOR WASSP-1(15) . . .

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Members, I'd like to open the floor for questions and comments. We'll have three-minute rounds for our first round, and then subsequent rounds. We can begin with...Vice-Chair Johnson, you have any questions for our panelists this morning?

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Sure. Thank you, Chair. Good morning, everyone, and thank you for all the work that you do for...for our community. It's really important. You know,

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

January 26, 2026

one...there's an interesting stat that I read, that tenants hardly ever have a lawyer when it comes to evictions, and landlords tend of always have a lawyer when it comes to eviction. So, on the...in this scenario, where you guys are out there helping with the mediation, is there any follow up with helping folks? The...like maybe that 20 percent that doesn't get it mediated, is there any help in helping them getting a lawyer, or do you guys kind of fill that role in a sense? That's my...my question for you guys.

MS. BOWERS: Member Johnson, what we do is immediately refer clients seeking representation to Legal Aid. There is a nonprofit, a local legal entity that we have become aware of, Pono Legal, and they are now trying to add resources to our community. But they're relatively scarce. We do have the self-help service, where volunteer attorneys answer singular questions and give information, but that's not representation.

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Well, thanks for that clarification, Judge Bowers. You know, I...that comment...that...that clarifying question Councilmember Paltin asked about FEMA, that was interesting to me. Because I know there's a landlord, I know there's a tenant...and where does FEMA fit in that? Are they...they're neither. What...what is it that...their role is? Are they just creating contracts, and saying if both sides agree to it, then that's just the way it is? Is...it's interesting that you have less rights if...if I'm hearing that correctly, you have less rights if you go over to FEMA housing; is that correct?

MR. WATANABE: Yes, Councilmember, that is how we read the contracts. Because essentially, FEMA is the tenant. And in certain circumstances --

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Oh.

MR. WATANABE: -- we've also had another managing company in between FEMA, and then the...the tenant as well. And the way we read it that, no, they've essentially negated your...your tenant rights when you're signing those FEMA contracts.

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: That's interesting. Okay. Well, thank you for that round of questions. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Vice-Chair Johnson. Next we have Member Batangan for your three minutes.

COUNCILMEMBER BATANGAN: Thank you, Chair. I don't have any questions.

CHAIR SINENCI: Thank you. Next, we have Member Cook, any questions for our panel?

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Thank you, Chair. Thank you both for your introduction and the presentation. Yeah, this is a big heavy issue. And thank you for doing the mediation, that helps. And not having representation in the judiciary system is a big issue, and it's hard. So, I...I'm curious, from the statistics that you have, do you have any information of number of people who have moved out of state through this process?

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

January 26, 2026

MS. BOWERS: We have not been able to collect that data because that means that they haven't been able to contact us, or we have not been able to follow up with the information, either email or address. So, that is data that we have not been able to collect.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Yeah. I...I guess to some degree, that's a State issue. I'm not...I think a lot of people aren't into extreme government oversight, but it'd be really nice if our government could have statistics about impact from legislation, and rules, and laws that are affecting us like this. Is there...do you have any information about the impact...have you had any communication with County of Maui, Department of Human Concerns, how the evictions are affecting our homeless population? And there again, you probably don't have stats, but, I mean, this is kind of couple things that I see, the collateral impact of the evictions. And basically, the evictions...people not being able to pay their rent.

MS. BOWERS: Committee Member, that is not information that we would be collecting, more so the Housing Hui or organizations that are in touch with those in our houseless community and have numbers that can back up the...the devastation that our...our community is undergoing right now...where there are, where they're moving to. They might even have more information about who's leaving the island.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Thanks. I...I am aware that you...some of these questions aren't necessarily things...answers you'd have, but it's the opportunity, while we're having this conversation, to bring...bring them to light because this is some of the collateral impact of it.

MS. BOWERS: I appreciate you bringing this up because right now, we are forming a stakeholders group, and it's happening across the state...but also here for Maui County, where all of those--not necessarily tied with mediation--again, talking with those that are houseless, talking with those that may have some type of rental assistance, we all would like them at the table to share our information, and not operate in silos.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Thanks. I've talked to peo...I know people who rent homes, and they're in the pinch also . . . *(timer sounds)* . . . basically being able to keep their house. I mean, people who are renting the houses to people who are facing eviction. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR SINENCI: Member Cook, would you want us to forward your questions to the Department on behalf of the Committee?

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Yeah, please.

CHAIR SINENCI: Thank you. Those--okay. Next, we have Chair Lee?

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: I have a question for you first.

CHAIR SINENCI: Um-hum.

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

January 26, 2026

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Is one of the purposes of today's meeting and this presentation is to gather information for budget purposes?

CHAIR SINENCI: You know, that could be an option. We are hearing that if...if there are no legal representation, then if there are nonprofits that are out there, that we need to...to help fund so that some of the tenants could get some legal representation beside the Legal Aid. So, yes, Chair.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Um-hum. Okay. So, Ms. Bowers, is there one particular nonprofit agency that you are aware of that provides reliable, consistent, rental assistance...as in MEO, or somebody like that?

MS. BOWERS: Chair Lee, MEO is the first that comes to mind. In the past, with Act 57, we did have involvement with Catholic Charities, but early on with Act 202, that was not an option. We are looking at Hawai'i Community Foundation...but again, at this point, no one has stepped up to provide that key part of this puzzle.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Right. I mean, Hawai'i Community, its foundation could provide funding, but not administration of the fund, yes?

MS. BOWERS: And that's the problem, having an entity willing to take that part on, on top of...say in our case, we could not do that. But that's why we were relying on say, MEO or Catholic Charities.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay.

MS. BOWERS: They already have the infrastructure.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Thank you.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Chair Lee. Next, we have Member Paltin, for your three minutes.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: I'm...I think I missed it. When does the transition from 202 to 278 occur?

MS. BOWERS: 278 starts February 6th. 202's sundown is February 5th. So, it's an immediate...the next day.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: February 6, 2026?

MS. BOWERS: That's correct.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: February 6. Okay. And it seemed...what...I'm...I might not have fully understood it, but it seemed like what you were telling Member Cook is, the people that don't seek mediation...or the people...the 20 percent of who it doesn't work for, you don't have the data on what...what then happens to them? Is that what the exchange was?

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

January 26, 2026

MS. BOWERS: We do not have a follow up on what happens if they don't show up, or if we've lost contact...because there are cases where we made initial contact with not just the tenants, but also landlords. And sometimes they've reached their own agreements, and they just don't get back to us, but we have to close these cases. So, of that 20 percent, I am still hopeful that not everyone is having a horrendous outcome. But I know we open doors, and people are now talking more. We're seeing it not just at our mediations, but we're also seeing it at the courthouse.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Do you have any idea the people that...you know, if the mediation is successful, and they leave on somewhat good terms or whatever, about their ability to find new housing opportunities?

MS. BOWERS: That would be a wonderful area to explore. We just haven't had the bandwidth to do follow ups.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Is there any sentiment, as you're talking to the people that, you know, the need for more shelters, or safe places to park?

MS. BOWERS: We get calls every day from people just at wit's end not knowing where to go, where they're going to be with their families. And again, because we don't have resources where we could say, call this number...and that's an area, I think, that this body can start talking about...where can we direct them when what we have in place is not sufficient, what else can we do?

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Does some of your data go into the price points, like what their income range is and what their affordability for monthly rent is? Like do you know...are you aware if these are ALICE constituents, or if they work for the government, like those kind of numbers?

MS. BOWERS: Of the numbers that I quoted earlier, I can give a quick rundown. So, less than \$10,000, 48 of the households, that was what they made. 57 of the households were 10,000 to 30,000. 60 households were between 30 and 50,000. . . .(timer sounds). . . 32 were between 50 and 80, 7 between 80,000 and 100,000, and we had 6 with household incomes of more than 100,000.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you. I heard the buzzer.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Mahalo. Next, we have Member Rawlins-Fernandez. Miss...Member Rawlins-Fernandez, are you able to hear the bell online?

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo, Chair. Yeah, I can hear the timer. Mahalo.

CHAIR SINENCI: How...how about the mics, are you able to hear everybody speaking?

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

January 26, 2026

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: I can hear everyone clearly. I was in touch with Staff, and let her know that the resources...or the folks online...like Member Johnson, I can hear loud...louder than the folks that are in the Chamber. And since I've let Staff know that, it...the mics have gotten louder. So mahalo, Staff, for being so responsive to those that are participating remotely.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay, great. We'll start your time now.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Okay, great. Okay. And mahalo to everyone for joining us today. I was quickly trying to look through both the bills...or acts, and trying to understand the...the concerns. Okay. So--what is this? Act 278, which was SB 825, will replace Act 202, and it'll be pae 'āina-wide, correct? Okay. I see nodding heads. Mahalo for that. And I see that it's intended to be a pilot program that is set to be repealed on February 4th, 2028. I looked through testimony to better understand the...the...the date, the ten days. I did see that the Hawai'i Judiciary, in testimony, did ask for it to be 30 days, so mahalo for at least trying. And I see the Hawai'i Realtors opposed it being even increased to ten days...shameful. So, I...I think part of the...the overall problem is the commodification of our housing inventory. And I don't care of what anyone thinks of me saying this, but I don't think people should own more than one house. I think that's part of the problem, that people are renting it for higher than what most people can afford because that's...they're using our housing inventory to make money off of people...our own community. So, I haven't been able to look through it enough to understand some of the opposition to...to this Act. What is this Act? This Act is 278. So, for now, I don't have additional questions. I guess...I guess my question for right now is, how can we, as a County...you know, I support you folks on the ground doing the work.

MS. BOWERS: I would say any and all ways to . . . *(timer sounds)*. . . get the word out is most important, especially when we have this slender timeline. Because what we did find out through the Act 202 was sometimes, the tenants just didn't know. And believe it or not, a lot of times, the landlords didn't know. For instance, they didn't know Maui Mediation had to get it the exact same day, or the timing didn't count. They didn't know they had to include all of the information on the form, or it would delay it. So, you've got landlords that are upset, that are trying to get the rents that they are owed...and you've got the tenants that are upset because they don't want to be on the streets. So, getting the word out is key. And when there's no money for marketing, however we can do it--coconut wireless, ground, neighbor-to-neighbor--it needs to happen.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo, Ms. Bowers. So, it sounds like the same thing from when we were discussing Act 202, just getting the word out. Mahalo for that. Mahalo, Chair.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Member Rawlins-Fernandez. And Judge Bowers did receive...just received a handout. So, we're going to be posting that on the...and on our...on the website, just for your...for more information on the program. Next, we have Member U'u-Hodgins, for your opportunity.

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

January 26, 2026

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Thank you, Chair. Thank you so much for being with us today. Sorry I missed the beginning part of your presentation, but would you please restate the income stats you gave Member Paltin so I can write it down?

MS. BOWERS: Our household incomes...we had 48 households with incomes of less than \$10,000 --

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Okay.

MS. BOWERS: -- 57 households with incomes of 10,000 to 30,000 --

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Um-hum.

MS. BOWERS: -- 60 households with incomes of 30 to 50,000, 32 households with incomes of 50 to 80,000, and 7 households with incomes between 80 and 100,000, and finally, 6 households with incomes of more than 100,000. I also have stats on the monthly rent amounts --

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Yes.

MS. BOWERS: -- and the months behind in rent.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Would you mind sharing that, please?

MS. BOWERS: The monthly rent amounts, 34 households had monthly rent less than \$1,000; 170 households had monthly rents between 1,000 and \$3,000; 21 households had a monthly rent between 3,000 and \$5,000; and 3 households had a monthly rent of more than \$5,000.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: I know you just said that. Can you please provide that in writing as well to the Committee? I would appreciate it.

MS. BOWERS: I will be providing the summary sheet that also includes --

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Thank you.

MS. BOWERS: -- the number of people in the household and the months behind.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: That would be super great. And you also said that it's difficult for you folks, if mediation doesn't prove successful, where they can go to. What...what do you hear from your clients? Where would they like to go? Are they looking for more single-family rentals? Are they looking for more apartment-style complex, low-income rentals? Would...would you be able to share that with us, if you know?

MS. BOWERS: Primarily, they want to stay where they are.

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

January 26, 2026

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Okay.

MS. BOWERS: And when that is not realistic, they want someplace safe.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Sure.

MS. BOWERS: But many are saying, if this doesn't work, we're moving.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Okay. And primarily where people are, are they in single-family rental unit, like complexes? Or what is...

MS. BOWERS: We get...the majority...because for 202, it was incumbent upon the landlords --

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Okay.

MS. BOWERS: -- to make contact. So, we --

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Okay.

MS. BOWERS: -- get 50, 60 notifications sent by some of these larger complexes --

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Oh.

MS. BOWERS: -- but they weren't the only ones.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Okay.

MS. BOWERS: And when the single landlords found out that that was a step they had to take --

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Uh-huh.

MS. BOWERS: -- then they would come in. I am sure, with my staff, I could go through how many were complexes because we have a detailed listing, month-by-month, of who contacted us, both the landlord and the tenant, and the information that we were able to compute for the summaries that I have.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Okay.

MS. BOWERS: But I would assume that the majority are indeed complexes.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Okay. Okay. . . .(timer sounds). . . Thank you.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Mahalo, Member U'u-Hodgins. I just had some follow-up questions, Judge Bowers. So, Act 278 takes over 202. It looks like the extension is for two years instead of one. And I was just wondering if you guys had enough funding for mediation services on the first year, and what the funding for 278...is that sufficient?

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

January 26, 2026

MS. BOWERS: Chair, the only funding that's being provided are for contract mediators across the State that will be assisting. Because what the Members will see in the...the PowerPoint that they'll be receiving is, these mediations are set up to be an hour and a half, that's usually more than enough time that we've found in dealing with it, but there's no funding per se. And that is actually a hardship for the individual mediation centers across the State. And that's why I keep harping on getting the word out. Because had this been an ideal situation where we could have presented a budget like we were able to do with Act 57, it would include the components that we know would have made it easier, and hopefully more effective for our community members. But right now, there is no additional funding for us to carry this out. The legislation says specifically, the mediations are to be administered by community mediations centers and the Mediation Centers of Hawai'i, which Maui Mediation is one of five...that's us. But there is nothing added to ease the financial challenge that this is going to be bringing on.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. And so, those applicants to 202 would likely continue in 278?

MS. BOWERS: I'm not going to say continuing. That may be a question for the Judiciary and Mr. DeLima about conversions. I'm thinking if it was filed under 202, it is 202. But at the stroke of midnight on February 6th, there needs to be the posting by the landlord on the door of the tenant and to Maui Mediation. And what the Members will find is, this Act is actually driven online. There is a dedicated site Statewide that landlords are going to be asked to contact. And then that site is going to send out the cases to the five different centers across the State. Because not everybody is going to be able to do the mediations online. And for that, if you are Maui County, then you will be coming to our office, or we will have a Zoom set up if it's a hybrid. Say a landlord is on the continent somewhere, we will still have it accessible for those that maybe aren't digitally literate. So, we want no one to miss out this...on this opportunity.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mr. DeLima, so if you were on 202 . . . *(timer sounds)* . . . you would have to reapply for 278?

MR. DELIMA: Correct. Yeah. So, 202 expires, right, on February 4th, right? You know, so any new proceedings would have to be done under Act 278 at that point, yeah. Our understanding is that it takes effect...well, I may be correct on this, but our understanding, it takes effect February 5th. And that's when we're planning for our rollout, the Judiciary, is February 5th to implement Act 278.

CHAIR SINENCI: And...and the current applicants have been already informed of its sunset date?

MR. DELIMA: So, our plan is to update our Judiciary website. You know, we have a posting on the website that notes all of the appropriate information for Act 202, and we intend on updating that this week with a disclaimer noting that...you know, that it will sunset on February 4th, so that anybody who comes online and...and wants to take those documents will understand that they have to get it done by that date.

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

January 26, 2026

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Thank you for that. Members, any questions for a second round? I do see Vice-Chair Johnson and Chair Lee.

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. Thank you, Chair. Very interesting discussion. I...I always try to find a role for us as Council and Councilmembers, where we fit in. One of the things I'm curious is, how instrumental is the County rental assistance? The programs that we have to help settle disputes between the landlords, how is it helping with just that kind of money? Is there any feedback on the programs that we have? You know, that...that County rental assistance, I think is 4.3, 5 million in the budget that they issue out to MEO, Ka Hale A Ke Ola, Aloha House...and I'm just curious, is...is that enough? And how is that work with you guys? You guys work with those folks? I'm...you know, I'm curious, on our end, is the rental assistance big enough? Has it...has it been flowing, easy working with those groups? Because we do have the money, I think? If it's not enough, then let's talk about it during budget.

MS. BOWERS: When we're talking about rental assistance, when we do our intakes, part of our questioning is, have you received rental assistance? And as I've said in my summary, of the cases that I reported on from February to December, only 13 had. And if they say no, we haven't, then we refer to MEO or Hawai'i Community Assets. And it's incumbent upon the tenant to make that contact. We don't do a hand off, we just try to give them a number of...possible a person's name, but we don't have a back-and-forth sharing about who can qualify, what the requirements are, did they do it.

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Yeah. Okay.

MR. WATANABE: And...and I would say that our experience is very similar. However, what we have heard from...from our clients is that currently, there is no rental assistance available from any of the groups. So...and, unfortunately, without having direct contact with those groups, I can't really speak to that, other than --

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay.

MR. WATANABE: -- anecdotally from what my clients are telling me.

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Well, that's good to tell us as a body because we can look into that, so thanks for that. The last thing I want to ask is, Judge Bowers kept speaking about getting the word out. Well, this is the body. We got the bully pulpit, right? So, we got the...if you guys want to send us some of that information...flyers is always good. You know, send it to the Committee and we'll...we'll spread the word. You know, we're sometimes on *Akakū* television with the public services announcements, maybe we can do something like that. I'm willing to...you know, you can reach out to me. Whatever you guys want us to do, we'll try to, you know, get the word out. Because it sounds like that was...you mentioned a few times, Judge. So, that sounds to me that if that's what you guys really want us to do, just reach out to me and I'll try to do what I can. But I'm sure the body, we...we all...we all want to help on this kind of thing. Thank you.

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

January 26, 2026

MS. BOWERS: Thank you. That would be most...most effective, and most appreciated.

CHAIR SINENCI: Chair Lee?

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Yeah. Judge Bowers, couple things. When you were giving us those statistics, were those numbers--households versus income and households versus rent--were the bottom line totals supposed to match?

MS. BOWERS: No, ma'am.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Oh.

MS. BOWERS: And this is why. Sometimes people didn't give us all the information, or they would stop mid-intake. So, that's why we had varying totals. And yet, the majority did provide that information

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay. The other part of my question is, I think most of the Councilmembers will be very happy to support any rental assistance programs because we already do. But my concern is that we not create a situation where we continually support them so they don't become supportive of themselves. So, there's got to be some kind of teaching, and preparing, and training people to become more self-reliant. Because if we continue to support and subsidize the same people, then there are fewer people we can help in the long run. The idea is to help people so that they can move forward, and we can help the next group, you know? So, do we have...besides a nonprofit that just gives out rental assistance, do we have a nonprofit that trains people to become more self-sufficient?

MS. BOWERS: Chair Lee, when I first started with Maui Mediation about ten years ago, there was consumer crediting in the Cameron Center, there were resources to help people get financially literate. At this time, unless there is something going on with MEO, I am not aware of a service and agency offering that type of assistance. And it's greatly needed. Because we see clients coming in and they're spending their household incomes on nonnecessities. And it's not our role to say, well, why aren't you doing this instead of that? But they need that type of instruction and guidance. That would be most helpful.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: And my final question is, when you talked about statistics earlier, you mentioned eight...I think you mentioned 80 percent success rate?

MS. BOWERS: That's correct.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: So, I'm assuming that the...the tenant and the landlord were able to make a...agree upon a payment plan of some kind.

MS. BOWERS: Not necessarily always a payment plan. Sometimes it was a move-out plan, where the tenant had enough time, and didn't feel like I'm going to be out on the streets in a week. Or an alternative, I'm going to pay a little extra . . . *(timer sounds)* . . . or when I get my taxes in. So, it's as creative as the parties are willing to let it be.

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

January 26, 2026

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay. Thank you.

CHAIR SINENCI: Next, we have Member Batangan.

COUNCILMEMBER BATANGAN: Thank you, Chair. First one is for you, actually. Can I ask for a 7(B) on rental assistance programs in the County? Maybe we could hear from our Department of Housing, Judge Bowers mentioned MEO, and Catholic Charities, maybe even Maui United Way. I think there are gaps in our ecosystem here that are worth discussing. And I think I would appreciate learning more about what each organization is thinking on how to address this. Maybe we could convene something where we can bring people together to have that conversation. Then a question for Judge Bowers, piggybacking off of--I guess, to get clarity on what Chair Lee had initially asked about what we can do to support and, you know, recognizing that budget is coming up. Can I clarify...the request was for money for others. So, Maui Mediation Services, does it have any County funding, or any grants that it...it applies for through...from the County?

MS. BOWERS: Yes, Councilmember. We have been fortunate enough to be included with the Housing and Human Concerns budget in their food, shelter, and safety pot. But that is for our mediation and education program. This is totally separate, totally different reporting. And we need assistance with both, but right now, our focus is in how can we assist the tenant? And even if it's not with rental assistance. If there was some type of program to tie in with our local attorneys, where they could be compensated to have a sit down to educate. Because we still hear stories where they're being frightened, where they're being given misinformation. And not just from landlords, but from people in the community. So, education is key. And if there was some way to subsidize, I think it would go a long way.

COUNCILMEMBER BATANGAN: Thank you. But I think I heard Member Rawlins-Fernandez ask, you know, what are ways that we could support you in your mission? If there...but I also hear now that there might be additional financial assistance that could be of benefit to Maui Mediation Services, specifically for this program, since the grant that the County gives is for a different program. If you could give some thought as to what the Council might be able to do to better support you on this effort, I...I'd appreciate that. And it doesn't have to be now. We can follow up, we can put a question to you, and...and ask that you think about and respond in writing. But if you can...if there are ways that we can support you, I'd be interested in hearing that.

MS. BOWERS: I thank you for giving me that opportunity.

CHAIR SINENCI: Just to add, Member Batangan, you know, we had some discussions when proposing to give more rental assistance, a lot of the programs right now are just strict for certain demographics. So, if we wanted to...to forward rental assistance to . . .(timer sounds). . . you know, another group, it...it might need...that we had...we may have to go ahead and change some of the...the wording in their programs. And so, that's why

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

January 26, 2026

MEO and Catholic Charities were more open to providing rental assistance to...to more people.

COUNCILMEMBER BATANGAN: Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR SINENCI: And my apologies, I did see Mr. DeLima's hand up earlier.

MR. DELIMA: No problem. Thank you. I just wanted to note, going back to the question about Act 202. Yeah, if you filed up until February 4, you will proceed as Act 202, even if you go beyond that, right? You know, so anything that comes in from February 5th, that'd be filed as an Act 278 matter. So, I just wanted to clarify that.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Mr. DeLima. Members, any other questions for our--oh, Mr. Cook?

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Thank you. I don't know if you have...from your data, do you have any insight into the...the type of housing...homes, condominiums, townhouses?

MS. BOWERS: Not with the summary sheet that I provided today. And I'm thinking back on our Excels, I don't believe that we tracked the type of structure. We did the number in the household, we did the rent, we did how far they were behind in rent, but not was it a stand-alone home, was it a condo. So, I don't... We collected that? No.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Thank you. That type of information may help us when we're reviewing housing proposals, and to kind of identify what potential group of people are...need this also. Thank you very much for the presentation. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Mr. Cook. We have Member Rawlins-Fernandez.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo, Chair. I don't have a question. I just wanted to say this...this statement for the record. I...I don't want to put all the blame on the tenants. I...I don't want us and the record to reflect that all the blame is all the tenants. There are some good landlords, and there are some greedy landlords. Some folks who bought houses regardless of how high the interest rates on the mortgage was going to be, with the intention of renting to our working class folks to extract wealth from the tenants. There...the area median income for a household is 95,000. So, 30 percent of the 95,000 is 28,500 a year...that's 30 percent of the area median income. Divided by 12 for the month, and that's \$2,375 per month. I have a friend who rented in Ha'ikū a two-bedroom for \$3,700 a month...and that's not a unique situation. The...the...it...it's becoming like too much. Like people can't afford...like the rents are as high as people can afford. And when they can't afford it anymore, then they get evicted because they know someone else will be willing to pay the inflated rent amounts. And it...this...this is part of the problem of a system. And I don't want us to just think, oh, it's because tenants are like somehow failing to be able to make enough money to...to pay the rents. In...in some situations, perhaps, that is the case. But the...the system that we have now is failing our people...that's what it is. Mahalo, Chair.

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

January 26, 2026

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Member Rawlins-Fernandez. Keala, did you want to add to the discussion from the...the Governor's Office side?

MS. KAOPUIKI-SANTOS: I don't want to speak on behalf of the Governor's Office, but I can...I can speak on behalf of the calls that we have regularly with those working directly with community. My knowledge, as far as the rental assistance programs go, are that they are quite limited, and typically run for about four to six months, maximum. And so I'm not sure right now that that is...well, I don't personally feel that this is necessarily a long-term solution for folks. And I don't think...in...in addressing Councilmember Lee's question, I don't think that right now that that's creating reliance on these rental assistance programs, although, I do agree that, you know, some type of counseling or education...you know, financial education program paired with rental assistance would be really excellent. But there is a need for more rental assistance, for sure.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo for that. Members --

MS. KAOPUIKI-SANTOS: I'm sorry, one more --

CHAIR SINENCI: Go ahead.

MS. KAOPUIKI-SANTOS: -- I'm so sorry, Councilmember Sinenci. One more thing that I wanted to throw out there. So, I know there was mention about wanting to know, you know, data...tracking folks that have been a part of mediation and, you know, where they go afterwards. And so, I think, this has been a need, you know, since the fire is being able to track. And...and I realize that this program doesn't just assist survivors, but there has been a need to be able to track folks, you know. And to be able to know where they're going, what their ongoing needs are. And so, if there was ever some additional funding that could go out to, perhaps, an opt-in program, where community members could choose to opt in to some type of like two-way communication program, where they could share, you know, kind of their demographics, and what their needs are, and where they also would be able to find out what some of the assistance available is to them. There are...there are...there is technology to do that, but it is quite expensive, and understanding, you know, the concerns about government oversight. But if it was an opt-in program, then folks would then be able to choose whether they wanted to participate in something like that or not. Mahalo.

CHAIR SINENCI: Great. Mahalo for that. Members, any other questions for today's guests? Okay. Seeing none. With that, we did...wanted to mahalo all of you for your questions and...and your comments. Mahalo to Judge Bowers, Mr. DeLima, Ms. Ferreira, Ms. Kaopuiki-Santos, and Mr. Watanabe for attending our meeting, and providing the public with more information, and some up...upcoming deadlines...important deadlines with the public today. Members, if there are no objections, I will defer this item.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Oh. I just had one last question.

CHAIR SINENCI: Go ahead.

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

January 26, 2026

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: In the educating of people on the bills, like Act 278...like, you know, similar to Member Rawlins-Fernandez, I looked at the Act for a bill or whatever, and it's barely understandable to me. So, like just regular people, in getting the word out, is there going to be a simplified like mem (*phonetic*), or something you can just share on your social media, or --

MS. BOWERS: . . .(*inaudible*). . . like in Act 202, Councilmember. We have a breakout simple form for both the landlord and the tenant. And I'm going to send this Committee all that we just have prepared so everyone will see. Because it's legalese, it's mumbo jumbo, and that makes it even more intimidating --

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Oh, yeah. . . .(*laughing*). . .

MS. BOWERS: -- for those that are already...

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: And for some of us on the Council as well.

MS. BOWERS: So, yes, we already have, and I will be forwarding that.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you. Just making sure because, you know, the language that people like me speak.

CHAIR SINENCI: Yeah. Okay. Any closing remarks? Seeing none. Members, any objections to deferring this item?

COUNCILMEMBERS VOICED NO OBJECTIONS (excused: YLS).

ACTION: DEFER pending further discussion.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Thank you for that. And thank you for being here. Thank you. Okay. Members, we...we have a second item, but we'll...we'll definitely take our mid-morning break so that we can swap out our panel for the next item. With that, we'll come back at 10:20. The WASSP Committee meeting of Monday, January 26, 2026, is now in recess. . . .(*gavel*). . .

RECESS: 10:10 a.m.

RECONVENE: 10:25 a.m.

CHAIR SINENCI: . . .(*gavel*). . . Aloha, and welcome back to the WASSP Committee meeting of Monday, January 26, 2026. Mahalo for that quick break, Members.

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

January 26, 2026

ITEM 1(16): CHILD ABUSE AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING PREVENTION IN MAUI COUNTY

CHAIR SINENCI: For our second item, WASSP-1(16), Child Abuse and Human Trafficking Prevention in Maui County. Members, January is nationally-recognized as Human Trafficking Prevention Month to raise awareness on how to identify and prevent this crime from occurring. There are estimated to be more than 27.6 million adults and children around the world subjected to human trafficking. Traffickers often take advantage of instability caused by natural disasters, conflict, or a pandemic to exploit others. Today, we've invited resources from Ho'oikaika Partnership and Parents and Children Together to share how Maui County is impacted, and what can be done to protect children, and to support our families. Before we hear from our resources, I want to note that this meeting may include some discussion issues that trigger, or can cause some distress, and I want to encourage the use of crises and mental health support resources. I know it can be a bit overwhelming for...for some people. And so, please reach out if you're struggling, or need additional support. We do have Hawai'i Cares at 988, or call PACT 24/7, crisis shelter hotline, at (808) 526-2200, or the Trafficking Victim Assistance Program at (808) 721-9614. With that, we have Ms. Marois from Ho'oikaika Partnership. Thank you for joining us this morning. And you can go ahead and begin your presentation.

MS. MAROIS: Mahalo, Chair. Good morning. Aloha. My name is Deb, and I'm with the Ho'oikaika Partnership. Thank you for having with us here today to talk with you a little bit about child abuse prevention in Maui County, and what we're doing through the partnership to support that. Next slide, please. I'm going to start off with a little bit of good news, actually, and some data that shows that over the last several years, the rate of child abuse reporting...of founded reports have been going down, and has been almost cut in half between 2020 and 2023. At the same time, however, we also know that one...nearly one out of every five adults in Maui County has suffered at least four or more adverse childhood experiences before the age of 18. And we'll get into a little bit of why that is so important to pay attention to. Also, one thing to note is, although the rates are going down, that's not a time to stop prevention work. There are many reasons why the reports could be decreasing. We'd like to think that our prevention efforts are helping...however, note that during this time period was also when COVID was happening, and a lot of keiki were out of school, and less eyes on...on them. Next slide, please. So, adverse childhood experiences, also known as ACEs, some of you may be familiar with this term. Basically, adverse childhood experiences are conditions that are experienced before the age of 18 that usually fall into one of three categories--abuse, neglect, or household dysfunction. And what they lead to is potentially toxic stress that can inhibit brain development in young children, and then also lead to long-term health consequences over the lifespan. Yes. Move this closer. I'm so sorry. Thank you for letting me know. Okay. So, ACEs are linked to...the more you have, the more risk you have for long-term health impacts across your lifespan. The good news, though, is that ACEs can be preventable, and...by protective factors. Next slide, please. And that's what Ho'oikaika Partnership operates as. So, we are a coalition of organizations--both community-based nonprofits, government agencies, educational institutions, philanthropy--all working together to prevent child abuse and neglect, and strengthen

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

January 26, 2026

families across Maui County. We were founded in 2008--so I think that's 18 years ago now--by five organizations, and have grown substantially since then. We are not a single program. I think that's one of the most important things to recognize about Ho'oiikaika. It's where all the various providers come together in one network to work together on behalf of this goal. And our major goal is really to create a seamless safety net to keep families and keiki from falling through the cracks. Next slide, please. We are guided by a ten-organization leadership hui, and they provide strategic vision, and funding...coordinate our funding. And our fiscal sponsor is Maui Family Support Services. One of the ways that they work together is by helping us all learn a similar approach and language. And I mentioned protective factors, you can kind of think of those as a shield that really helps prevent families from feeling the most extreme effects of stress, financial hardship, mental health issues, poverty, and other factors that create the risk for child abuse. Next slide, please. So, we work together for five interconnected goals, and we really take what is known as a systems approach to prevention. None of this work stands alone, it's all interconnected. And what we are really trying to do is make sure that we are not duplicating services, that we're working in alignment, and not working in silos. Next slide, please. So, I'm going to stick on this slide for just one moment so that you can see how we kind of visualize this integrated system. We really focus on three populations--families, and caregivers, and providers. And then systems, and the community. And where each of these populations, we undertake different activities to support prevention. And where they all intersect is where we have the outcome of child abuse prevention. This is supported by that foundation of a leadership hui. And some of the functions that they're really critical for is coordination, relationship building, data collection, and sustainability. Next slide, please. So, I'm going to talk a little bit about some of the specific activities that we've been doing, focused on just 2025. We have one of the foundational services...one of the few direct services that Ho'oiikaika Partnership provides is navigation services. And it's been, in this last year, primarily one part-time person. And during that time, you can see she has served 161 families across Maui County. And really, what this person does is be a guide by the side so that when families reach out for help, that they get support before they're in crisis, and hopefully avert some of the more challenging situations, such as houselessness. You can also see from this slide that the cost of living, which we've heard a lot about in the previous session, has...is really reflected in the kinds of support that people are requesting. And next slide, please. Community engagement is really the first...kind of opens the door to the navigation services. It's often the place where people first come in contact with many of the organizations that work within the partnership and with our navigator. And so, they're more than a feel-good activity, they're really a place that is a learning hub, both for learning about community resources, and also for putting a face to the name of our local providers, and a way to build trust. It's also a distribution hub for necessary items that really help families get through the month. Next slide, please. Our public education campaign is really a foundation of kind of helping everyone across Maui County really understand what it takes to prevent child abuse, both at a community level and in the home. And this is where we lift up protective factors and we normalize health-seeking. So, there can be a lot of stigma attached. It could be very difficult to reach out and ask for help. And we really want people to understand, there's no shame. Everyone needs help sometimes. And we base this work on national models that are adopted for our island and Maui

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

January 26, 2026

context. And an example of that, again, is the protective factors. You can see down the left-hand side, some of the concepts here can be really academic. You know, social and emotional competence in children, for example, what does that mean? So, we've tried to create family-friendly language that communicates those concepts in a way that resonates with people. So, show keiki aloha is a way to talk about how do we teach our keiki to have solid relationships? The national Talk, Read, Sing [*sic*], Talking is Teaching Campaign is...we've been the first county in the State of Hawai'i to bring this to our families here. And it really is a way to encourage families to remember that they are their keikis' first teachers, and that by talking, singing, and reading to your children every day, that is a protective factor...and it can help, again, be a buffer to some of the stressful situations we know our families are facing. Next slide, please. And then finally, strengthening the workforce. These are the people that do the work, and we really need to lift them up. It has been a really difficult...the last couple of years, especially post-wildfire, have been really challenging. And this quote, we can't pour from an empty cup, comes from one of our providers who has participated in our Healing the Healers monthly peer support groups that were initiated after the 2023 wildfires. So, we offer monthly meetings, which aren't just a place to come and receive information, but it's really an active environment where people coordinate their work and learn about community resources. We also have an annual conference and trainings. Next slide, please. And then finally, I'll just leave you with a little comparison chart. Why is prevention a strategic investment? Ho'oiikaika Partnership started in 2008 during an economic recession. Prevention is almost always the first thing to be cut. It's seen as, you know, extraneous. But really, what it does is help save lives, it helps save hardship within families, and it helps save money in the long run as well. When you think about it, we have a lot of gaps, as was mentioned earlier, in our systems...in our ecosystem. And what we try to do is fill those gaps, and by having a connected system instead of a fragmented system...that, in and of itself, helps serve as a protective factor. Happy to answer more questions and talk with you about this further. Really thank you all for your support over the last few years, especially as we come to you during Child Abuse Prevention Month, and you've acknowledged the importance of that work. Mahalo.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Deb, for that information. Next, Members, we have Ms. Kutaka from Parents and Children Together for her presentation.

MS. KUTAKA: Aloha mai kākou . . .(*inaudible*). . .

CHAIR SINENCI: Aloha.

MS. KUTAKA: Aloha. I'm Cayla Kutaka, and I represent an organization called Parents and Children Together. Our organization is dedicated to improving the lives of Hawai'i's children, individuals, families for more five decades here in Hawai'i. Today, I was asked to provide an over you...overview of sex trafficking, and data on its prevalence here in Maui County. As was said by Councilmember Sinenci, I also want to acknowledge that this month is Human Trafficking Awareness Month. Today's presentation is grounded in the understanding that trafficking is real, an ongoing issue affecting individuals and communities everywhere, and awareness is one of the first steps toward prevention and support. Could I get some support with the presentation?

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

January 26, 2026

Mahalo. I'm...I can continue to riff. Oh, no. Okay. Wonderful. So, I'll start off this presentation...I'll...I'll give you a heads up, there's quite a bit of data and information, but I'm happy to unpack and support in any way possible. But I'll start off by providing some alignment, just to ensure that we're all speaking consistently about trafficking, about what this topic is. So, the Trafficking Victim Protections Act of 2000 defines trafficking as a commercial sex act. So, if we think commercial, we're thinking there is an exchange of goods, right? The act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion. So, for a victim over 18, so an adult, to be considered a victim or a survivor of trafficking, this would need to involve, number one, force. So, we're thinking physical violence, assault, use of drugs, or other substances are involved. Or two, fraud. In these situations, we think of what we call grooming. So, these are the victims who are told on social media that they're going to be a model, who they think that they're in a relationship with this person, and may feel love and affection toward their trafficker. Or three, which is coercion, meaning blackmail, debt bondage, threats to family members, et cetera. Another point to make here with this Act is that for a victim under the age of 18, in order for prosecution to occur, force, fraud, or coercion does not need to be present, only that there is a commercial exchange of a minor. Next slide, please. So, now that we're in alignment with what we're actually measuring and what we're looking at here, we're going to build a better understanding of the size of this concern...because this is real, and this is occurring in our community. So, data shows in just one year, 80,000...80,000 online ads were posted. 150 in-person establishments were discovered, which can amount to anywhere between 1,500 to 2,500 victims exploited in Hawai'i alone. So, another point to make is, of these victims, about 23...almost 24 percent were on Maui. So, I...I looked up...according to the Hawai'i Census, Maui accounts for about 11 percent of the State's population, and yet considering victims of trafficking were at nearly 24 percent are here on Maui. Next slide, please. Great question. So, the data that was collected is...was technically...this is for Maui Island. There was also some data that I'm happy to share to Councilmember Rawlins [sic] around Molokai. The data was collected by an organization called Child & Family Service, and they do not provide service on Lāna'i, so that is data still to be discovered. Thank you for asking. Our local population here in the County is vulnerable to sex trafficking for several reasons. First off, in confirmation with some of the data and experiences that Deb shared, the average age of a survivor's first experience of trafficking is 11 years old. One out of every five sex trafficking victims interviewed identified that their first trafficking situation or event was as a child. About 25 percent reported to have been trafficked--not by a stranger, not by a boyfriend--but by a family member, including parents, guardians, older siblings, uncles, aunties, grandparents. These are family members, and of our 'ohana and our community. Nearly 70 percent of individuals reported having been trafficked while they were houseless. And a national advocacy group cite that one out of every three runaway children are approached by a trafficker within 48 hours of leaving their home. Also to note, individuals who identify as LGBTQ+ or individuals with special needs are at a increased vulnerability due to their increased need possibly to feel a sense of belonging, a lack of awareness, or a lack of other resources and education. Deb also spoke about ACEs a bit more extensively, but all of the trafficking victims identified and interviewed for the Arizona State University data reported high rates of adoles...or adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs. This includes exposure to family violence, neglect, childhood sexual abuse, domestic or dating violence, a mental health diagnoses,

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

January 26, 2026

substance use, or houselessness, amongst others on the list. This further drives forward our intention and our need for prevention programs here on Maui. Next slide, please. It may be easy to think like this isn't us. We know our community so well. We have, you know, large families and a big connection. But the other point that I made--I had to get ahead of myself--but 64 percent of the trafficking victims that were interviewed identified as at least part-Hawaiian. So, these are our people. This is our community. Many of the contributing factors here that increase Hawai'i's vulnerability, it...it's...number one, being that there's such an online presence and such an online demand for commercial sex. So, some of the data shows one in seven adult men in Hawai'i buy sex, in some form, online. So, I know we think, you know, there's a lot of people that travel here. There's a lot going on. But it...it breaks down to 1 in 11 if we're looking at residents only. So, that's 1 out of 11 male residents of Hawai'i are purchasing sex online in some form. It can include photos, it can include other things--social media, dating apps, classified sites, gaming platforms, chat rooms, and the like. A second contributing factor is, a significant number of visitors coming and going within Hawai'i can...can increase the pool of...of one-time offenders or new buyers, which can make it more difficult. It can kind of minimize detection of these types of things. And also, military presence, if we're talking about our outer islands or other islands, can complement...complicate the enforcement process. On top of that, as we been spoking [sic] about ACEs and other, you know, contributing factors, vulnerability, the high cost of living, housing insecurity...Hawai'i can be more susceptible to what we call survival trafficking. So, that involves an individual exchanging sex for things like basic needs. So, we're talking food, shelter, clothing, money, and transportation. Next slide, please. Despite the severity of sex trafficking as a Class A felony, prosecution rates remain low. So, between 2014 and 2020, Hawai'i's Criminal Justice Data Center reported only 19 arrests statewide for trafficking. State and local cases have historically faced challenges as well. Hawai'i has had one Federal conviction specific to sex trafficking in the last ten years, and it was just last November he was sentenced. These numbers are significantly low for a variety of reasons, including the psychological, financial, and physical coercion from the trafficker. Often, you know, encourages or causes our victims to not come forward. A lot of our victims fear retaliation for themselves and their 'ohana. Many victims also...they may not identify as being trafficked. Others distrust law enforcement or advocacy agencies due to past experiences, or for the variety of needs that they may experience, as well as many find themselves unable to maintain the sustained cooperation and investigation due to the many financial house...financial or housing instability, or lack of other social supports. There's a high legal burden of proof to be able to prosecute these types of cases. Psychological coercion is more difficult to prove than those with physical force involved, and many traffickers align with the narrative that there's...if there was an exchange, if there was something received, then it must have been consensual. In addition to that, late reporting of these instances can interfere with evidence collection, and investigation resources can be limited. Next slide, please. So, at Parents and Children Together, I couldn't help but mentioning...similarly to Ho'oiikaika Partnership, Parents and Children Together, also known as PACT, is dedicated to providing services to the community, not only in intervention, but also in prevention. This is a representation here, this visual, of the programs that we provide statewide, all having a hand in mitigating ACEs for our 'ohana and the community. Our Maui County programs include domestic violence prevention and intervention at our

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

January 26, 2026

Family Peace Centers on Maui and Lānaʻi, family strengthening services for our ‘ohana that may be at risk for child abuse and neglect, as well as our therapeutic behavioral health support for youth ages 10 to 17, which tends to be some our...our greatest at-risk youth groups. I'm happy to speak more on some of these other topics as well, whether at...at future meetings, or whatnot, just regarding some of these greater community concerns. Next slide. Specifically to trafficking intervention, the resources statewide are a bit more limited. Trafficking victims require an increased range of direct services, including medical support, mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment, housing, and trauma-informed care in all systems. The trafficking victims interviewed by ASU report being in contact with many of Hawai'i's institutions of care, sometimes while being trafficked. So, that includes schools, hospitals, mental health providers, criminal justice system, child welfare services...which really reminds us that we have a duty to report all suspicions to our statewide hotline and also reminds us that there is an education and an outreach component needed for our community. So, for our children, and in one of Deb's slides, it shared that two to three of the Child Welfare Services reported cases involved trafficking in 2023. And all of those cases were forwarded to what we call our Trafficking Victim Assistance Program. So, that is funded by the State through Susannah Wesley Community Center. And Parents and Children Together is Maui County's provider for that service. That includes, you know, case management, crisis response, educational support, and advocacy for our youth who have experienced trafficking. We work closely with the Children's Justice Center, who facilitates when we have multidisciplinary team meetings of providers. We call our team the HOME team, Helping Our Maui Exploited. That's pretty...pretty good of us put that together. And we coordinate care, we support law enforcement in investigation, and all around are able to share that information to support our victims and survivors of trafficking. PACT is also near the end of a grant cycle for providing general community outreach and training around trafficking. We do training around identification, reporting, prevention, as well as intervention, and we've done that through across a number of providers, including our community providers, airport security, hotel security, our first responders. Many of our Maui youth are also supported by programs on O'ahu, including...that is where Hawai'i's youth shelters around trafficking are located, where they're able to provide more comprehensive care, including our...our Pearl Haven shelter by Ho'ōla Nā Pua, and a soon-to-be second shelter by Hale Kipa. Imua Alliance also provides both direct service and legislative advocacy for our exploited individuals. And then PACT does have some O'ahu programs around our individuals and youth who have been sexually assaulted, which includes trafficking. Next and last slide, please. This is an incredible amount of information. I definitely don't...that is...that is very true...and less stats and figures. But what I really want to do is close with a reminder that these are all real people. These are friends, these are cousins, these are neighbors. I appreciate that time that you have allowed me to speak on the prevalence of the significant concern for our keiki, and our ‘ohana, and our kaiāulu. Sex trafficking is present in our community, but it's also preventable and addressable. County Council plays a critical role in this leadership and an example for our community. So, I very much...and we very much appreciate the communication and collaboration started here today. We stand firmly in serving our ‘ohana and look forward to our future collaboration. Mahalo for your time.

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

January 26, 2026

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Cayla, and mahalo for the presentations. Members, before we get into discussion, we'll go to testimony. Staff, do we have anyone wishing to testify?

MS. MCKINLEY: Yes, Chair. We have two individuals signed up to testify.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Let me quickly read the testimony log [sic]. Let's begin with public testimony. Oral testimony via phone or video conference will be accepted. In accordance with the Sunshine Law, testimony can occur at the beginning of the meeting but cannot be limited to the start of the meeting. Testifiers wanting to provide video or audio testimony should sign up in the Chamber, join the online meeting via the Teams link, or call in the phone number noted on today's agenda. For individuals wishing to testify via Teams, please raise your hand by clicking on the raise-your-hand button. For those calling in, please follow the prompts via phone. If you're online, please raise your hands. For those on Teams, Staff will lower your hand once your name is added and...and enable your microphone. Written testimony is encouraged and can be submitted via the eComment link at maucounty.us/agendas. Oral testimony is limited to three minutes per item. Once you're done testifying, and if you do not wish to testify, you can view the meeting on *Akakū* Channel 53, Facebook Live, or maucounty.us/agendas. Staff, could you call on our two testifiers, please?

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the first testifier is Kristin Mills in the Chamber, and the...to be followed by James Langford on Teams.

CHAIR SINENCI: Good morning.

. . . BEGIN PUBLIC TESTIMONY FOR WASSP-1(16) . . .

MS. MILLS: Morning. Good morning. Oh, it does work. Hi, my name is Kristin Mills, and I am a member of Ho'ōikaika Partnership. And I just...I'm here as a member of the partnership, which is very vast, and covers many facets around adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs. And I'm here on...from the facet of the long-term effects of ACEs. Because it's not just about...it...prevention is so important. But unfortunately, there's so many people living with ACEs, it's important to be very aware of the long-term and lifelong impacts of ACEs, and the continued work that we need throughout the life span, not just in children. So, I've worked in health and wellness my entire life. In 2018, I transitioned back to chronic disease prevention, health promotion. And it was at that time I took a course on ACEs--never heard about them before--through a national organization. And it completely blew my mind wide open about how ACEs are at the core of everything we're trying to prevent, all the chronic diseases, and preventing all the positive healthy behaviors we're trying to promote. It's at the core. It's so important. So, it's in this...in...in this area of...not just prevention, but building resiliency skills that is so vital throughout the lifeti...life span. And that's how I got connected with Ho'ōikaika Partnership, and that's the role that I play with them. Not in the...I don't work with children, I don't prevent in the 0- to 5-year-old ages, but I help...try to help build resiliency skills physically, mentally, emotionally, all of it, so that folks...you know, even all of us with high ACE scores can still combat those ACEs with positive

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

January 26, 2026

experiences, with resiliency skills, with tools in our toolbag to keep going, and live healthy and vibrantly. So, it...sorry, Deb already mentioned about ACEs, and that they include abuse, neglect. A general term also to include...is to think about is aspects of a child's environment that undermines their sense of safety, stability, and bonding. So, when we think about the ACE score, a lot of times we look at okay, what's your ACE score? And that's a score of between 0 to 10, and that's typically from the child's home environment. It doesn't even include community trauma, such as wildfires, such as homelessness. I guess homelessness could be part of their...their home score. It's...it's...there's a lot of aspects of trauma to...to consider here. So, throughout the life span, as Deb mentioned, as...as the ACE score goes up your risk for various conditions go up, but to be more . . .(timer sounds). . . oh, that three minutes went by fast.

CHAIR SINENCI: 30...yeah, 30 seconds to --

MS. MILLS: Oh. Oh, 30 seconds. Okay.

CHAIR SINENCI: Yeah.

MS. MILLS: So, it can cause...it increase one's risk for obesity, heart disease, stroke, all those things that we don't think of to do with childhood trauma. It could increase their risk for suicidal ideations. It could also affect their ability to live healthy, eat healthy, be surrounded by healthy people and positive, supportive friends and family. It could increase service of being trafficked. The list goes on. It's so important to acknowledge ACEs throughout the lifespan. . . .(timer sounds). . . And so also, last comment, ACEs, if not...if we don't help people to develop resiliency skills, ACEs can continue intergenerationally, and continue on...whereas the opposite is, if we help build resiliency skills and support people, they can nip it in the bud, and choose to parent very differently than how they were parented, and help create healthier generations. Thank you so much.

CHAIR SINENCI: Thank you, Ms. Mills. Members, any questions for Ms. Mills at this time? Seeing none. Thank you for your testimony.

MS. MILLS: Thank you.

CHAIR SINENCI: Staff?

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next and currently last person signed up to testify is James Langford on Teams.

MR. LANGFORD: Aloha, Council, Chairperson. Hope you're well. This...today's...the second part of today is very dear to my heart. I've...I've experienced (*audio interference*) I kind of dedicated my life since I was a young boy, 4 years old, to understanding the dynamics of human trafficking on all levels. And (*audio interference*) so...so, testifying on how to support...and the people who are tasked to stop this type of behavior, like myself, get...and I speak up, like I have, and then you get blamed for all the behavior . . .(laughing). . . that the folks are trying to cover up. You see it in the news, like the

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

January 26, 2026

shootings over the weekend. When you don't tell the truth, people die...literally. That's what we're seeing. So, I've experienced, through Maui Circuit Court in this process, being blackmailed, have little children's lives threatened in order to cover up people who are accountable that apparently would've gone to jail had I not signed some...some document, you know, under duress presented by an ad litem in Circuit Court. . . .*(inaudible)*. . . I was evicted, you know, for...as far as earlier in the meeting by another person from the...representative from the Second Court [*sic*] acting in a corrupt way when I spoke out about the human trafficking at 175 East Lipoa under the management of Paramount Hotels, LLC. And the...the drug...the smell of the drugs on weekends when the church was there, and people saying, they're giving us drugs, I don't want it. So, this is an example of where I witnessed human trafficking happen, I reported it. And then all the people of the majority started sending people out to talk to me...all on video, all documented. So, I'm in a position where I have to file a court case in order to get wildfire benefits, and stop potentially *(audio interference)* human trafficking in my own family. I don't get to speak to my children, probably because there's some secrets they don't want to me to know, that my kids . . .*(inaudible)*. . . that's a terrible . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . thing to have to deal with. So, any of you folks there who are testifying today who are...please reach out to me. My email is jimlangford@me.com, and I would love your help in bringing the truth to light because...you know, there's people on the Council who may be threatened if they tell the truth. I'll protect you people, all of you. Like I'm here to keep you all safe --

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, James.

MR. LANGFORD: -- not the people pressuring you. Oh, sorry, sir. I love you.

CHAIR SINENCI: Yeah. Mahalo. Members, any questions for Mr. Langford?

MR. LANGFORD: . . .*(inaudible)*. . . okay . . .*(inaudible)*. . . that's what I do.

CHAIR SINENCI: Seeing none. Thank you for your testimony. Staff?

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, no one else has signed up to testify, so we can proceed with last call. If anyone in the audience or on Teams would like to testify, please come up to the mic and begin your testimony or use the raise-your-hand function on Teams. I will provide a brief countdown...three, two, one. Seeing no one else wishing to testify, Chair.

CHAIR SINENCI: Members, any objections to closing public testimony on this item at this time?

COUNCILMEMBERS: No objections.

CHAIR SINENCI: Thank you.

. . . END PUBLIC TESTIMONY FOR WASSP-1(16) . . .

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

January 26, 2026

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Members, we'll open the floor up for questions and comments. We'll have three minutes for our first round and subsequent rounds. We'll go ahead and start with Vice-Chair Johnson. Go ahead.

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Thank you, Chair. Good morning, everyone. And first off, I want to thank you all for doing the work that you do. It's really important, so thank you so much. You know, this kind of presentations bring...bring on emotions to me. You know, and it's tough to hear what you guys are doing. So, I want to...us...on the Council side, on the County side, to make sure that we're helping. So, maybe...Deb, if you would, maybe you could elaborate on the navigation services, and are they staffed, and capacity, and the funding? Maybe we'll start with that.

MS. MAROIS: Sure. Thank you, Councilmember. We really appreciate your support. The navigation services, it's...honestly, it's been kind of a tough year. We came before the Council last April to let you know that we are facing a funding gap, and you all unanimously voted to support us in funding, and we so appreciate that. At that time...just before that, our...our...the person who had been serving as a navigator had resigned her position because of the approaching lack of funding. And so, we were able to hire a new person part-time. Took a couple of months to onboard that person, and get them up to speed and trained, and they started providing services in June. So, we had a couple of months of gap in services. But despite that, we were able to still do an amazing amount of support to families, and within the community, as you saw on the slide. The...at this time, the funding that was allocated by the Council, we just received the contract to go ahead, just about ten days ago, I think. Yeah, it was a little...little delay. So, we backfilled with funding from other sources during that time, but we were not able to bring our navigator back to full-time status...but we do have plans to do that starting in February, so we're very excited and really grateful to be able to do that.

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. Starting in February, but I'm curious about that delay. You said you just got...got it recently, like a week ago. What...can you elaborate on the delay? What happened?

MS. MAROIS: Well, we submitted our paperwork back in June, I believe. And, from my understanding, there was a Countywide restructuring of how contracts and grants were being administered. And I don't really...I honestly can't tell you much more than that.
...*(laughing)*...

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. So, what was the result? You...you had to lay someone off and rehire them? Or how...what happened with that?

MS. MAROIS: Okay. So, to be clear, the...the...we did not lay off anyone.

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay.

MS. MAROIS: The person saw that an approach was happening that we were not going to have funding for the position...this was back in March. And so, needing to take care of her family, sought a new job and ...*(timer sounds)*... resigned.

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

January 26, 2026

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: All right.

MS. MAROIS: May I finish?

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Well, I...you know...and I heard my time. But that's a concern. I know you guys are doing work out in the community. It doesn't need to be delayed on the County side. I want to support you guys. So, maybe we can look into that later, but thanks for your response. Thank you, Chair. No further *(audio interference)* --

MS. MAROIS: Mahalo.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Vice-Chair Johnson. Next, we have Member Batangan for your three minutes.

COUNCILMEMBER BATANGAN: Thank you, Chair. I actually don't have any questions, but I'd be happy to yield my time to the Lānaʻian *(phonetic)*.

CHAIR SINENCI: Oh, right. Okay. We'll come...we'll come back around to Vice-Chair Johnson. Next, we have Member Cook.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Thank you, Chair. So, it's Ms. Morales [sic]? Thanks. Is school bullying one of the factors in this? I recently been contacted by one of my constituents who is...child is in 9th grade, getting beat up, school saying we'll handle it, not handling it. What would you suggest?

MS. MAROIS: Yeah, thank you for that question. I'm...I'm aware of...I read some accounts over the weekend to pretty disturbing incidents, and it seems to be part of a bigger pattern. And I know that there are many people who believe it starts in the home, and people...keiki need to be taught within the home. These go back to our protective factors...the social and emotional competence, how do we handle relationships, how do we handle hard feelings, and how do we do that in a healthy way, and not through violence? There also is our community institutions. Schools in particular are also holding part of the kuleana for teaching our keiki these skills. So, it goes hand-in-hand. And then honestly, my opinion is that, you know, we see leadership on the political level, in our nation, we're not...we're not role modeling healthy behaviors at a national level even, right? So, our children are exposed to this, and they pick it up. They pick up everything, they're like little sponges. So, we do have...I know one of our partners, Mental Health America of Hawai'i, does a lot of educational programs within schools, and part of that is anti-bullying. You know, that is a huge part of our public education campaign, and really working with families, parents...how do you talk with your children about these hard issues? And then, you know, schools are hard-pressed. They have a lot of things they have to juggle. But the more that we can offer these kinds of educational programs within schools, the more systematic that education is across the board.

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

January 26, 2026

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Thank you. Since I have a little more time, how often do you hear, in what you're doing, about schools not being safe for some children? And...I mean, I can see the collateral, some people is [sic] having problems at home, they're taking it out at school. How big a problem is that?

MS. MAROIS: I...I don't necessarily have data at my fingertips on that, but...

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Your...your gut feeling from --

MS. MAROIS: Oh.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: -- your experience.

MS. MAROIS: My gut feeling. You know, I think that bullying is part of the landscape of being a child and growing up in this culture, unfortunately. And it's something that...I mean, I've...I was a victim of bullying as a child, so it added to my ACEs score, right? And it's...it makes our children vulnerable. . . .(timer sounds). . .

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Thank you for that. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Member Cook. Next, we have Chair Lee, followed by Member Paltin.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: I really don't have any questions. I am very supportive of this 'ohana...this consortium, as well as the individual agencies that make up the consortium. And I agree that we, in public service, as well as people who participate in the public arena, need to be better role models relative to civil and courteous behavior. It's on us. Thank you.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Chair Lee. Member Paltin?

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you. I'm referring to slide 8 on the sex trafficking in Maui County page. And it looks like that only O'ahu has trafficked youth shelters. Is that contribute to an ACE, to be like separated on a different island? Or is that more better to get away? Or that's just what we have, and deal with it?

MS. KUTAKA: Uh-huh. I appreciate your question. I...I think first and foremost, that is just what we have available. I think it can go multiple ways. There are some opportunities for youth to be separated maybe from a situation that was negatively impacting their day-to-day. So, there is some divide that's helpful. For others, it is hard to lose some of your support systems in place. Unfortunately, in Hawai'i, our only two youth shelters that are serving our trafficked youth are on O'ahu.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Because they have a bigger volume?

MS. KUTAKA: Be...likely just because of funding, and because of the agencies and organizations that have been able to open them. We've had individual foundations and things come to us asking if that was a need. I think on Maui, to serve our youth, we

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

January 26, 2026

may need maybe more outreach and awareness and kind of greater systems-wide approach to be able to identify our youth that are in need of that service in order to lift it up and to be able to continue . . . *(indiscernible)*. . . here.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Hmm. And then on the ACE numbers, is it sometimes people have adverse effects growing up if they didn't have a number of ACEs? Like that's not the only determining factor?

MS. MAROIS: Are you asking about sex trafficking or...

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: No.

MS. MAROIS: Okay.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Because this is the Ho'oiikaika Partnership talking about ACEs, right?

MS. MAROIS: Uh-huh, yes.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: And then it talks to risks linked to ACEs, not necessarily do they always have an ACE to have the risks linked to ACE?

MS. MAROIS: I see what you're saying. So, some of the health conditions that people might have, they're not...are they always linked to ACEs? No. So, for example, you could have cardiovascular issues, or obesity, but not necessarily have a high ACE score. But what we do know is that the more ACEs that a person experiences, the greater the risk for those health conditions. And it's really kind of very interesting to see that some of those health conditions, you would not necessarily think are connected to early childhood trauma, like obesity. You know, when I learned about that, that was kind of a surprise to me.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: So, then, you know *(audio interference)* . . . *(timer sounds)*. . .

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Did you hear that?

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Luckily --

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: What's going on in the Chambers?

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: There was a high...high-pitched like --

CHAIR SINENCI: Dog whistle.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: -- like much worse than a mosquito. I just was going to ask...so then the testifier that was talking about the resilience part, why would we not do that to all of our children? And, I mean, even if a individual child doesn't have the ACE, maybe they could help another friend, perhaps, that has a ACE by learning. Like maybe

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

January 26, 2026

they're more receptive to the resiliency coping stuff because they're not dealing with the ACE, and it might be easier for their friend to hear it from a friend or a peer than like a clinical person.

MS. MAROIS: Sorry, absolutely. So, one of the things...well, we talk about...you know, ACEs are not...I think...I don't think anybody gets through childhood unscathed. If you think about your own childhood, there are challenges...and really, a lot of hardships. And, in general, humans are very resilient. And the number one thing that helps children be resilient is to have a trusted adult that they can turn to that they know they can trust. And that is so important, and a lot of children don't have that. So, that's a good place to start. And then with peers, yes, they can be a support, especially if they're educated in that. And one of the things that we have that have been coming online in Maui County is YouthLine, which is trained young people who are providing mental health support to their peers to help get them through hard times. So, that's definitely a great strategy. And I just want to leave you with this image. If you think about protective factors as sort of the mitigating buffer effect to ACEs, it's kind of like having an umbrella. If you think about a keiki and their family with everything pouring down--the financial stress, the houselessness, the substance use, mental health issues, whatever it may be--those protective factors act like an umbrella to really shield them from the worst effects of that. And so, that's where we really put our focus, is building those as a...as a buffer.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you.

CHAIR SINENCI: Next, we'll have Member Rawlins-Fernandez, followed by Member U'u-Hodgins.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo, Chair. And mahalo to our...to resource folks. Mahalo for your presentation. Very informative and heartbreaking. I...I don't really have questions, but...and maybe I missed it. Could you speak a little more to some of like the 64 percent were Kānaka 'Ōiwi...like what...what are some of the more like cultural strategies in reaching some of the 'ohana that you folks...your organizations have employed, and have...have those been effective?

MS. KUTAKA: Great question. Yeah. So, the...the data indicated 64 percent. So, out of about...it was 360-plus individuals were interviewed, about 100 of them identified as previously been trafficked, and so 64 of that 100 identified as part or whole Hawaiian. And so, yes, I...I think there's a component. A lot of what we try to do across our organization and a lot of the organizations we work with is to meet the family where they're at and provide that individualized care. So better understanding the values of the 'ohana, better understanding the needs and maybe specifics for each individual that we serve. So, we have curricula that we pull from to provide these services, but we absolutely intend to plan and develop goals and supports that are individual to the individual that we are serving. And I...I think that reflecting that the culture of the household and the culture of the 'ohana is...is most important in...in raising some of these youth that we are serving. I'm happy to speak more to individuals, if you'd like...I can also pass it to my partner, Deb, here.

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

January 26, 2026

MS. MAROIS: Thank you, Cayla. I'll just add some of the things that we do in Ho'ōikaika Partnership. Every year, we hold an annual 'Ohana Fest in April for National Child Abuse Prevention Month, and about 50 percent are...of the people who attend are...identify as Hawaiian or part Hawaiian. And we try to ground all of our messaging in...in Hawaiian culture, in island culture, so that it's relatable to people, and it's not just academic language. And then some of our partners provide parenting classes and parenting education, and they really lean into an approach that is called the Kamalama Parenting curriculum. And that was developed specifically to appeal to parents who are of Hawaiian ancestry. . . .*(timer sounds)*. . .

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS FERNANDEZ: Mahalo for that information. I heard the timer. Mahalo, Chair.

CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo...mahalo, Member Rawlins-Fernandez. Member U'u Hodgins, for your opportunity?

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Thank you, Chair. Thank you so much for your presentations, and...and the hard work that you guys do. I don't know how you say all these things and then go out in public and have to just like smile at strangers. I think I would be super apprehensive about everyone...which I already am. We don't do sleepovers at my house. Anyways, if I could expand on Member Rawlins-Fernandez's question. So...and this is a good thing and a bad thing, but so much of our local culture surrounds...is...is 'ohana-based. But 25 percent, as you just said, is trafficked by their own family. So, how do you...how do you mitigate that, when somebody...some kid is telling you that their aunty, or their mom, or their grandma, or their uncle, or their...or whatever...how do we...how do we have like cultural-based, trauma-informed information, but also reminding them like that's absolutely not okay?

MS. KUTAKA: I appreciate you citing data from the presentation. I thought that was wonderful. I also...I mean, I...I feel...I feel very similarly to what you're feeling right now. As a Kānaka, myself, I feel like this is something that...reaching our people and understanding what...like what resiliency means to them.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Yeah.

MS. KUTAKA: And...and thinking back to our...our culture, and what that looks like in practice. And especially...you know, like we've been speaking about these protective factors. Our...our keiki's first teachers are our parent. And you're absolutely --

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Uh-huh.

MS. KUTAKA: -- right, a lot of them are placed in situations where that is where they are most at risk.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Uh-huh.

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

January 26, 2026

MS. KUTAKA: And so I...I think that's a need. We do have some...there are...like...like Deb was speaking, the Kamalama Parenting Program is built off of, you know, Hawaiian 'ohana values.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Right.

MS. KUTAKA: And so a lot of that parenting piece for...from our prevention side does bring that culture aspect in, which I...I very much commend Maui Family Support Services and the other providers using that. And when it comes to our keiki or our youth that are receiving our services, we really just try to ground in what is important to them as an individual, and drive that forward. But I absolutely recognize that additional 'Oiwī resources would be helpful in that aspect.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Yeah. And I mean I know that we were talking about our Hawaiian 'ohana but, you know, it's...it's the case for so many other cultures as well. I have another question too. So, my daughter is 13, I think Member Paltin's daughter is roughly the same age, Member Rawlins-Fernandez's daughter is roughly the same age, and we were talking about some of the community aspects. And even on our Federal level, you know, women are having difficulties getting access to healthcare...life-saving healthcare. How do we talk to our daughters about that? I don't know what to say sometimes. And especially when we are priced out of our home, and the more affordable places to go are the red states that don't value women's health, what do...what do I tell my daughter? Like...and I know this is kind of a personal question, but I'm sure . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . mothers everywhere are struggling with this conversation right now.

MS. KUTAKA: Permission to go beyond time. Is that okay to answer?

CHAIR SINENCI: Go ahead.

MS. KUTAKA: I have a daughter myself. I absolutely recognize that this is a community need...in both parent education, as well as our education of our youth.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Yeah.

MS. KUTAKA: I...I...our recommendation always is being honest, and...and trying to make it at their level where they're able to understand. And all...you know, all youth understand a bit more or less than --

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Sure.

MS. KUTAKA: -- and you know them best. But it's just understanding that safety...identifying that safe adult, knowing what it looks like and what it doesn't look like. And for some of those things, it is just the...you know, my...my daughter is four, and it's...even at that age, it's the body safety. It's the knowing who can and can't. It's the knowing what is safe. And so, just continuing to have those conversations, and continuing to open the door for our youth to be able to come and ask those questions safely...no shame, let's

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

January 26, 2026

talk about it, so that we can identify what is safe and what is not safe in...in all aspects of the things that they do.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Thank you. Chair, can I please ask one more question?

CHAIR SINENCI: Sure.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Thank you --

CHAIR SINENCI: Go ahead.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: -- so much. So, I've seen in the continent where they have a program like...it's like bikers that help protect children when they have to go testify against their abuser in court, and so they're not alone. Do we have anything like that? Can we...can I sign up for anything like that? Do we have that?

MS. KUTAKA: I love that idea, and I'll have to look into it a bit more. We...we do...we partner with a lot of other organizations--Victim Witness, the Children's Justice Center, Friends of the Children's Justice Center--there's a number of organizations that we --

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Uh-huh.

MS. KUTAKA: -- kind of collaborate with to provide that support. And...and including our crisis advocates are there to walk alongside them in this process.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Okay.

MS. KUTAKA: It can be difficult. There's a lot of different aspects to it, but we...we try our best, but I also recognize like these are all providers that...you know, we're used to this, and this is old hat for us. But for those who are testifying, and our survivors out there, just having someone to make them feel safe, I'm...I'm open and interested in all the opportunities to explore that.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR SINENCI: Thank you, Member U'u-Hodgins. I have a couple questions for Deb. You know, oftentimes we'll get one of those letters in the mail to...to take one...maybe a family member's child. Do you guys work with the...the County? And who...who sends out those? Or...or the court system...if the court is separating the child from the parents, do you work with the court system? And who sends out those?

MS. MAROIS: Okay. I wish I could answer that question for you. Do you know, Cayla?

MS. KUTAKA: Could...could I ask a clarifying question? Do you mean like a letter to remove a child from their home?

CHAIR SINENCI: Yeah. Like sometimes we'll get...family members will receive a letter --

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

January 26, 2026

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Or if the parent passed away, too.

MS. KUTAKA: Got it. Got it.

CHAIR SINENCI: -- like to...to take the custody of a child?

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Or sometimes they --

MS. KUTAKA: Yes.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: -- even ask like if you want to call them, or be that safe person, or like provide them material goods too.

MS. KUTAKA: Uh-huh. I...I would love to defer this question. The best expert for this would be a member...member from Child Welfare Services. Am I able to encourage the Committee to vote on a resource? We do have someone in the gallery that would be able to answer.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Sure.

MS. KUTAKA: I know . . .*(inaudible)*. . .

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Oh, sorry. I'm not the Chair.

CHAIR SINENCI: Any objections to designating--what's her name --

MS. KUTAKA: Danny *(phonetic)*? Danny, you want to come up?

CHAIR SINENCI: -- as a resource under Rule 18(A) of the Council?

COUNCILMEMBERS: No objections.

CHAIR SINENCI: Thank you. If you want to come up to the podium? What's her name again?

MS. KUTAKA: Danielle.

CHAIR SINENCI: Danielle.

MS. EGEBERG: I'm Danielle Egeberg. So, I actually currently work for Friends of the Children's Justice Center, but previously I was with Child Welfare Services. And I think that the letter that you're talking about is from EPIC 'ohana, and so it's a family findings letter. It indicates an opportunity for family that they were able to connect with that potentially are linked to that child. Yeah.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. And then my other question was, who sends out...we did see on the news that there was on...on O'ahu, that they found some missing children. But

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

January 26, 2026

who...who puts out all the AMBER Alerts if...if there are missing children in our communities?

MS. EGEBERG: AMBER Alerts are done by the police.

CHAIR SINENCI: Oh, police does that.

MS. EGEBERG: Yeah.

CHAIR SINENCI: And then oftentimes, we don't get...if...a follow up if they were found or not, but --

MS. EGEBERG: So, Amber alerts have pretty strict criteria, and there's very few of them that have ever been done in the State of Hawai'i. But juvenile runaways, anybody can report if they are the guardians of the child. And then there's a sign off for it to be posted with MPD.

CHAIR SINENCI: With...

MS. EGEBERG: And then there's the different agency, Attorney Generals, that can also help with posting different ones. And then through NCMEC for child endangerment and trafficking, there's another program that you can do the paperwork with them.

CHAIR SINENCI: Through MPD?

MS. EGEBERG: That one is through NCMEC, it's a national program.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. And then where do you get the information if there are potential predators in your neighborhood?

MS. EGEBERG: Ooh, I don't know. I think...yeah, Google. I'm not an expert on that one.

CHAIR SINENCI: Do you know?

MS. KUTAKA: Yes. There is a site --

CHAIR SINENCI: Yeah.

MS. KUTAKA: -- online--I'm...I'm blanking on the name, I could forward it to this Committee afterward--but there is a way to type in a name, and I--or type in a...you know, identify the type of offender that you're looking for. And you can look at the map in your community to identify how many may be located.

CHAIR SINENCI: But it's...it's readily available for...for --

MS. KUTAKA: Yes, it is ready...readily available.

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

January 26, 2026

CHAIR SINENCI: -- for...for parents?

MS. KUTAKA: It is Googleable if anybody on...you know, on *Akakū* or online is looking. It is something that anyone can access.

MS. EGEBERG: Yeah. And there's some apps now, too, that you can do your whole neighborhood.

CHAIR SINENCI: Oh, okay. Great. Thank you for those answers. Members, any other questions for Danielle while we have her at the podium? Okay, thank you.

MS. EGEBERG: Thank you.

CHAIR SINENCI: Members, any need for a second round of questions? Go ahead and raise your hands. Committee Vice-Chair Johnson, go ahead.

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Thank you, Chair. Just a real quick follow up for Deb. With...hopefully the County can help you with a six-month sanction on your grant, making up for that delay that you guys had. How much do you need, specifically, if you know, to fulfill your mission in 2027?

MS. MAROIS: Thank you, Councilmember. So, my understanding...we...we went through the RFP process with the Department of Human Concerns and submitted our application for Fiscal Year '27 and '28, and are waiting to hear at the end of March whether or not that is included in the Mayor's budget. I believe we requested the same amount for both those years as we did for Fiscal Year '26, which was \$175,000. What we were told was, if we are not included the Fiscal Year '27 and '28 budget, there's a possibility that we could be given a no-cost extension because of the time delay. However, if we are included in the budget going forward, then the year would start over in '27.

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay.

MS. MAROIS: Uh-huh. Yeah.

VICE-CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. All right. Well, thank you. Thank you for that. Thank you, Chair. No further questions.

CHAIR SINENCI: Any other questions, Members? But Deb, you will apply with the...the Department for --

MS. MAROIS: Yes, we --

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay.

MS. MAROIS: -- did apply, and we submitted everything on time, and...and are in that...in...in that process.

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

January 26, 2026

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay, great.

MS. MAROIS: Yeah, mahalo.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. I don't see any more questions. Did...Cayla or Deb, did you guys have any closing remarks, or while we're on TV, if you want to share anything with the...the public?

MS. MAROIS: Mahalo, Chair. I guess, I...I would like to...in...in response to some of the questions about funding, I think that it's important to really recognize that continuity is really important. It is so difficult to plan and build trust with community members when you don't know from year to year, is this program going to be here, are we going to have to, you know, fold it up? You know, it's just...we're a very relational field of work. This is about humans. And when you build trust with people, it can be easily broken. So, that's part of why we really want to emphasize that continuity. And it's difficult...it's a really difficult funding environment, and we recognize that there's a lot of...a lot of competing priorities. And so, we appreciate the support. And for those who are listening out there, hooikaikapartnership.com. You can visit our website. There's lots of information. My contact information is there. I'm happy to talk with anybody further about any concerns they may have, how to make reports, how to be a support within community, and I think that's the most important thing. People are very reluctant to report child abuse, for a lot of good reasons. Once a child in a family is involved with the system, as much as we want the system to help them, it also can bring a lot more hardship. And being remove...removing a child from their family and putting them in foster care is...that's a traumatic event. So, we want to avoid that as much as we possibly can. And it takes all of us, it's not just one entity that is ever going to solve this. So, again, we really appreciate your support and thank you for your time today.

MS. KUTAKA: And I'll continue to add, at Parents and Children Together, we are available. We have funding currently in through the end of the fiscal year for outreach and training around this. We're able to...to provide training specific to the provider, specific to the individuals that are serving 'ohana or youth in our community on, you know, identifying these risk factors, identifying suspicions and reporting. We are also a strong component. We...we very much believe in collaboration and really appreciate all the work that our partners are doing out in the community. We stand ready to serve, and we look forward to continuing to do so.

CHAIR SINENCI: Thank you, Members. Mahalo to Ms. Deb Marois and Cayla Kutaka for joining us this morning and providing the public with more information on this very important topic. Members, are there any objections...without objections, I'll defer this item.

COUNCILMEMBERS VOICED NO OBJECTIONS (excused: YLS).

ACTION: DEFER pending further discussion.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Staff, is there anything we need to do prior to adjourning this meeting?

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

January 26, 2026

MS. MACDONALD: Chair, there is nothing that is outstanding.

CHAIR SINENCI: Okay. Members, thank you all for your great questions and comments today. This concludes today's Water Authority, Social Services, and Parks Committee meeting. The time now is 11:32. You got some extra lunch time. And this meeting is now adjourned. . . .(*gavel*). . .

ADJOURN: 11:32 a.m.

wassp:min:260126:crp

Transcribed by: Tricia Higa

WATER AUTHORITY, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND PARKS COMMITTEE MINUTES
Council of the County of Maui

January 26, 2026

CERTIFICATION

I, Tricia Higa, hereby certify that pages 1 through 45 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 24th day of February 2026, in Mililani, Hawai'i



Tricia Higa