

## **EDB Committee**

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**From:** Karen Worthington <karen@karenworthington.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, September 10, 2020 1:09 PM  
**To:** EDB Committee; Yukilei Sugimura; Keani N. Rawlins; Kelly King  
**Subject:** letter/testimony for Sept. 10 Maui County meeting  
**Attachments:** testimony for Sept2020 Maui budget mtg\_Karen.pdf

Dear County Council Members Rawlins, King, and Sugimura,

Please see my attached written testimony for today's Maui County Economic Development and Budget Committee Meeting. I appreciate your attention to the time-sensitive critical, need to appropriately spend CARES Act funds to help Maui families.

Please feel free to contact me if you need additional information.

Best regards,  
Karen

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September 10, 2020

**Maui County Economic Development and Budget Committee**

Testimony submitted via email to: [edb.committee@mauicounty.us](mailto:edb.committee@mauicounty.us)

**Position:** Use Federal Covid-19 Relief Funds to support Maui County families

Dear Committee Chair Keani N.W. Rawlins-Fernandez, Vice-Chair Kelly Takaya King, and Committee Members:

My name is Karen Worthington, and I am a registered voter who lives in Kula, Hawaii 96790. I am writing to you as a private citizen. My work as a children's policy attorney, a Core Partner of Ho'oikaika Partnership, and the coordinator for Islands of Hope-Maui (IOH) informs my testimony. In my work with Ho'oikaika Partnership and IOH, two collaboratives focused on preventing child abuse and neglect, I have seen how this pandemic is affecting front-line providers in Maui County and the families they serve. I also have friends who are impacted because they have lost jobs and are falling behind on paying their basic daily living expenses, and family members who struggle with the reality that every day they are potentially exposed to covid-19 because they work in a health care setting or are a first responder.

Islands of Hope-Maui has seen an increase in people looking for rental assistance. Maui County needs a solution that will help families until they are back at work AND back on their feet financially and emotionally. Delaying and deferring rent or mortgage payments doesn't help—if families can't pay now, they won't be able to pay a lump sum of back rent in the future.

Parents need a safe, accessible, and affordable plan for their children so that the parents can return to work and be productive at work. Monitoring Department of Education distance learning while trying to work from home is not practical or sustainable. We need more options and creative approaches, especially for elementary-age children. For example, could the county open community centers or large unused county and state spaces (like large spaces at UH Maui College or school and county gymnasiums) and provide wi-fi, help with technology, good air flow, tables and chairs safely spaced apart, bathrooms, hand-washing stations, and adults or teens to supervise the children? This would employ some adults and help many families.

I know that Hawai'i must spend about \$320 million in federal funds by December 30, 2020. I would like Maui County to request and use some of that money to support families. Some of the most pressing needs I see are for the following:

- More childcare slots and funding for those slots

- Help with elementary-school-age children who are participating in distance learning through DOE and need constant supervision and help while parents need to be at work or working from home
- Stable, affordable housing without facing a big bill of past rent or past mortgage payments due when the emergency protections and housing assistance funds end
- Cash in families' pockets so they can pay for their families' basic needs
- Flexible funding for nonprofits.

Please know that Hawai'i's nonprofit community is on the edge of a financial cliff. Once our human services providers fall off that cliff, there will be no one to serve our county's most needy families. Nonprofits are facing cuts in their state contracts and are being asked to serve more families in new ways with fewer resources—this is unsustainable—nonprofits need financial help. Furthermore, expecting Maui County's families to subsist on "charity" from churches, nonprofits, businesses, and good Samaritans is neither appropriate nor sustainable. Hawai'i needs to spend its CARES Act money to support families and support the organizations that support families.

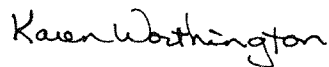
In addition to requesting your help in spending the federal money on Maui, please make the following information public on the county website:

- How much federal and state money has been allocated for Maui County because of the pandemic
- How much of that has been spent and what it has been spent on
- What the plans are for any remaining amounts
- Who is informing the County's decisions about these funds, and the best ways for families to get involved in the process.

Please continue to hold public meetings on this topic and make all documents related to these issues accessible to the public.

Thank you for your service to the County and for your attention to my testimony. If you would like additional information related to this testimony, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

Best regards,



Karen Worthington

Copies to:

Committee Chair Keani N.W. Rawlins-Fernandez, Vice-Chair Kelly Takaya King, Council Member Yuki Lei Sugimura