

HLU Committee

From: County Clerk
Sent: Wednesday, November 19, 2025 7:57 AM
To: HLU Committee
Subject: Fw: Bill 9 Testimony

From: Sveta Saheba <svetadalal@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, November 18, 2025 9:04 PM
To: County Clerk <County.Clerk@mauicounty.us>
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Subject: Bill 9 Testimony

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Aloha Chair and Councilmembers,

My name is Sveta Saheba, and I am a Kapalua Ridge Villa condo owner who cares deeply about Maui, its people, and its cultural legacy. I am writing today to respectfully oppose Bill 9.

Over the years, I've seen firsthand the difference between visitors who stay in locally owned condos versus those who stay in large corporate-run resorts. Guests who choose to stay in homes or condos tend to be more invested in the culture, history, and everyday life of Maui. They visit farmers' markets, support small businesses, learn from local hosts, and often return year after year with genuine respect. In contrast, it is often resort tourism—not residential vacation rentals—that encourages a more consumer-driven, party-oriented style of travel that disconnects visitors from Maui's traditions and natural environment.

It is important to acknowledge that Maui's corporate hotel industry has been a major driver of high-volume, low-mindfulness tourism. For decades, these institutions have shaped the way visitors experience the island, often prioritizing profit over cultural preservation and environmental stewardship. I can only imagine how much more land could have been protected—and how much more sustainable the tourism model could be today—if small businesses, long-term residents, and individual condo owners had been the primary avenue for visitor lodging.

Many condo owners are not faceless investors. A large number have lived on Maui for decades, raised families here, volunteered in local organizations, and contributed meaningfully to the community. Their guests, too, tend to travel with a lighter footprint and a more respectful mindset than typical resort clientele. Eliminating or severely restricting their ability to rent will not only hurt local livelihoods but also remove an important channel of mindful tourism.

Additionally, we must consider the unintended impact on housing. If prices drop suddenly as a result of this bill, Maui will likely see an influx of foreign buyers with cash offers—outcompeting local families and reducing the island's owner-occupant population even further. This outcome would worsen displacement, increase vacancy rates, and shift more property into the hands of offshore owners who have no day-to-day connection to Maui or its people.

In closing, I share the Council's commitment to preserving Maui's traditions, culture, and future. We all want a sustainable path forward. I respectfully ask that instead of punitive measures like Bill 9, we work together on solutions such as developer incentives, workforce housing subsidies, and thoughtful planning that truly expands housing opportunities for local residents while maintaining the character and values of this island.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Warm regards,

Sveta Saheba - svetadalal@gmail.com

