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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Maui County Council
Committee on Government Relations, Ethics, and Transparency
200 S. High St
Wailuku, HI 96793

June 6, 2022

Re: Support for Resolution 22-119

Aloha Committee Chair Molina and Maui County Council

Today, I am writing in support of Resolution 22-119 and the creation of the East Maui Water Authority.

Wai – water - is the lifeblood of our society, and across my career in public service, I have always been a staunch believer that our freshwater resources belong in the hands of our people, not special interests, or for-profit entities. This amendment presents an opportunity for Maui County to ensure that its water resources are protected, not only for our local communities, but our future generations and the 'āina on which they will depend.

The benefits of Maui County obtaining the long-term water lease are enumerable. These include: incorporation of community-based watershed management planning; the creation of a municipal agency that can use public and private grants and financing for long-term capital improvements to the system; secure water resources for all farms and agribusinesses; and formalized mechanisms to incorporate the interests of all stakeholders.

This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity for our local communities to have ownership over Maui's water resources. This Resolution is a critical first step that the County Council can take, today, to stand up as servant leaders for the betterment of a vital resource that touches and impacts everyone. As I stated in a 2019 letter to Mayor Victorino, I believe the County of Maui must take steps to secure its own long-term water lease to free itself from its dependency on private, commercial, third-party operators who are not duty bound, as we are, to uphold the state's public trust obligations to conserve and protect Hawai'i's natural resources for the benefit of present and future generations.

The opportunity to accomplish this is now.

Me ka ha'aha'a

Kaiali'i Kahele
Member of Congress