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TESTIMONY

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on item WR-20, dealing with the requirement for backflow devices. Please let me initiate this testimony by admitting that I am not a plumber and do not profess to have any real knowledge of the mechanics of this issue. When the Water Director says that this is a health and safety concern, I believe him. However, having worked in the area of the unintended consequences that can arise out of the well-intended government actions for decades, the Realtors Association of Maui wishes to state its concerns with the proposal as it stands and to suggest an amendment that could mitigate those concerns.

The way we understand this proposal, whenever property owners seek a building permit for any purpose, whether it deals with water related issues or not, they would also be required to install a backflow protection system on their water system. This could add as much as \$500 in cost to the single-family property, as well as the added problems of hiring a licensed plumbing contractor and obtaining a separate plumbing permit and a subsequent plumbing inspection. What is not clear to a non-plumber layman like myself is whether this new addition to the residential water system will have to be inspected regularly to ensure it is functioning properly. If it does, that would be another whole layer of hassle for the homeowner.

We believe that this added requirement will be a serious disincentive to average residential property owners to seek required building permits. We already have a problem with homeowners sidestepping the building permit process. And let's just say that our permit process is not well known for its efficiency. For many property owners, there is already a philosophy that the less involvement with the County, the better.

RAM believes that the issue being addressed really has more to do with the commercially owned or multi-family properties than private, single family residences. So we would like to propose a simple compromise: please consider exempting single family residences from this proposed requirement. Commercially operated properties have the capacity to deal with this requirement and are much more likely to be the cause of the issues that the proposal is addressing. With that compromise, we will be able to support this proposal. Mahalo.

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