

MICHAEL P. VICTORINO
Mayor

SANDY K. BAZ
Managing Director



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
COUNTY OF MAUI
200 S. HIGH STREET
WAILUKU, MAUI, HAWAII 96793
www.maui-county.gov

June 30, 2020

The Honorable Michael Molina, Governance, Ethics, and Transparency
Committee Chair
and Members of the Committee
200 South High Street
Wailuku, Hawaii 96793

Dear Committee Chair Molina and Members:

**SUBJECT: PROPOSED CHARTER AMENDMENTS (GET-10(15) &
GET-10(4))**

The Council is currently considering multiple charter amendments to place on the ballot in the upcoming November 2020 election. I am *disheartened* by this Council's *recklessness* to propose any changes to the county's organization without the proper analyses on how the amendments will benefit the **economy, efficiency, and improved service** of this county.

Pursuant to Section 3-9, Revised Charter of the County of Maui (1983), as amended, ("Charter"), "It is declared to be the policy of the county to promote **economy, efficiency, and improved service** in the transaction of the public business in the legislative and executive branches of the county by:

1. **Limiting expenditures to the lowest amount consistent with the efficient performance of essential services, activities, and functions.**
2. **Eliminating duplication and overlapping of services, activities, and functions.**
3. **Consolidating services, activities, and functions of a similar nature.**
4. **Abolishing services, activities, and functions not necessary to the efficient conduct of government."**

The proposed charter amendments to inflate government (the bifurcation of the Department of Housing and Human Concerns, and the establishment of a new Department of Agriculture) are being proposed as we deal with an economy that has been emaciated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Economic vetting has been largely absent from council deliberations on these proposed charter amendments. It is *irresponsible* and a *disservice* to our residents to place these questions on the November 2020 ballot without considering projections of the County's taxing and revenue collecting capabilities in the ensuing fiscal years.

For instance, the proposed charter amendment submitted by Councilmember Molina, aims to bifurcate the Department of Housing and Human Concerns ("DHHC") to create the Department of Human Concerns and the Department of Housing, without any *clear objective goals*, or even a *proposed budget*. If approved by council and the residents of Maui County, the new amendment will go into effect on **July 1, 2021**.

The bifurcation merely splits the DHHC into two halves and does not create any additional responsibilities or fund the necessary positions required to move housing initiatives forward; which goes against the provisions of Section 3-9, Charter.

The Council ultimately controls the fate of housing projects, regardless of bifurcation. On this Council's watch, **40%** of the housing projects that were submitted for consideration were **disapproved**.

Another proposal by Councilmember Sinenci proposes to establish a new County Department of Agriculture. Again, while well intentioned, this proposal lacks the amount of analyses required to determine what this will cost to residents, the function and responsibilities of the Department, and what other essential initiatives will be cut in order to fund this new department.

Agriculture is already a function of the Federal and State government, and this proposal seeks to create a new department whose *main function is simply to interpret related state and federal laws*. The County would be better suited in the endeavor of promoting agriculture to create positions under the Office of the Mayor, instead of a new department.

The creation of new departments has costs that would deflect funds that could be used to develop or acquire actual attainable housing or create agriculture initiatives. A cost analysis to determine the carrying cost for civil servant and appointed positions, equipment, office space, fringe benefits, and other operational costs, would be required to support the creation of any new departments.

March 6, 2019

Page 3

The Charter Commission, which will assemble in 2021, **is the appropriate body** to guide and make recommendations for *amendments of this magnitude*. Further, I reiterate that it is a *disservice* to the residents of this County to put questions on the ballot that aren't thoroughly vetted.

I respectfully urge this Council to seriously consider its role in controlling the "County's purse" and not appropriate needlessly on endeavors that may burden our residents in these trying times.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael P. Victorino". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

MICHAEL P. VICTORINO
Maui County Mayor