



## **Budget, Finance, and Economic Development Committee (BFED)**

### **FY27 Residency Area Meeting April 1, 2026**

Submitted by: Deb Marois, Coordinator, Ho'oiikaika Partnership

Aloha Chair and Councilmembers,

My name is Deb Marois. I serve as Coordinator for Ho'oiikaika Partnership. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify, and for your continued commitment to strengthening families in Maui County.

Ho'oiikaika Partnership is a countywide coalition that brings together health and human service providers, community organizations, and public agencies to prevent child abuse and build a stronger, more coordinated system of support for our 'ohana. We focus on strengthening protective factors so families can thrive and challenges do not escalate into crisis.

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month. Last year, this Council unanimously recognized that in Resolution 25-92, affirming the County's shared kuleana to protect keiki and support our 'ohana and workforce. You also unanimously approved \$175,000 for our work. That investment was meaningful, and our 2025 outcomes reflect it.

We applied for FY27-28 funding through the Department of Human Concerns RFP process. However, the Mayor's proposed FY 27 budget does not include Ho'oiikaika Partnership. I am writing on behalf of Ho'oiikaika Partnership to respectfully request that the Council include a dedicated funding line of \$199,200 in the FY27 budget, sustaining and modestly increasing support for something proven and essential.

#### **You Have Already Said This Matters**

In Resolution 25-92, this Council affirmed that cross-sector collaboration creates a seamless safety net for families; that Healing the Healers demonstrates the need for ongoing workforce investment; that the 2023 wildfires placed extraordinary demands on our social service providers; and that the County has a moral obligation to protect every child on Maui, Moloka'i, and Lāna'i. Those words were not ceremonial. We are asking that you fund them.

#### **The Need Has Not Gone Away**

As we discussed in January, nearly 1 in 5 adults in Maui County report having four or more Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) before age 18, traumatic events that increase lifelong risks of chronic disease, mental illness, substance use, and child welfare involvement. That statistic was measured *before* the 2023 wildfires.

Two-plus years later, families are still struggling. Providers are still stretched thin. Federal funding is contracting. And for a coalition whose strength lies in coordination, consistency, and trust, funding gaps are deeply destabilizing.

We experienced exactly that in 2025. A delayed grant release forced us to pause both Navigation Services and Healing the Healers for several months. We lost a key staff member and contractor. Navigation Services were only restored to full-time capacity in February; Healing the Healers relaunched just last month. Both are currently funded only through June 30. That disruption affects

more than programs. It affects families seeking help, and providers who rely on a coordinated system to do their work. That is the real cost of fragmented, year-to-year funding.

Prevention requires consistency. Trust is built over time, and damaged when services disappear and reappear. County investment would provide the stability needed for continued success.

### **What Your FY26 Investment Achieved**

In 2025, Ho’oikaika Partnership made progress across all five strategic goals, engaging dozens of agencies and hundreds of providers to strengthen coordination, reduce duplication, and improve how services reach families.

- The HP Navigator served 161 families representing 527 individuals, including families from Moloka’i and Lāna’i, helping them access food, clothing, and critical resources.
- HP engaged 3,910 families through 13 outreach events across the county and distributed more than 1,000 prevention and basic-needs items.
- 190 providers from 50 organizations attended our first in-person conference since 2019. 96% said it met or exceeded expectations; 90% gained new tools applicable to their work.
- Healing the Healers supported 54 providers from 23 agencies. 90% reported stronger peer connections and new strategies to prevent burnout.
- 95 people from 58 different organizations participated in monthly coalition meetings. 98% reported increased understanding of community resources, strengthening referral pathways and reducing duplication across the system.

### **Coordination Is a Direct Service**

Research shows that every dollar invested in child abuse prevention yields up to \$7 in savings through reduced healthcare costs, lower incarceration rates, and decreased reliance on emergency services. Ho’oikaika Partnership is that upstream investment.

In a coalition model that uses a systems change approach; coordination is a direct service. Without it, 75 agencies stay siloed, families fall through cracks, and every other dollar invested in this system becomes less effective. The Navigator who knows the families on Moloka’i and in Hāna. The Healing the Healers facilitators who have earned the trust of frontline providers. The monthly meeting that keeps agencies coordinated: These take years to build and can be lost in a budget cycle.

Our coalition leverages funding from state agencies, philanthropy, and partner agency resources but the landscape is shifting. The Maui Strong Fund that supported much of our post-wildfire surge has wound down. Federal funding is less certain. County support is the stable, local investment that enables the whole system to function seamlessly.

### **A Request to Sustain What Works**

Ho’oikaika Partnership is Maui County's infrastructure for prevention. It is an 18-year-old coalition with demonstrated results, rigorous evaluation, and deep roots throughout the community. The primary challenge we face is not lack of impact. It is lack of stable funding.

We are requesting \$199,202 for FY27, a modest increase from last year that reflects the true cost of full-year Navigation Services, Healing the Healers, concrete support for families, public education, and

the workforce coordination, evaluation and communications infrastructure that holds everything together. With this investment, we will:

- Restore full-time Navigation Services for 150–200 families, including those from Moloka‘i, Lāna‘i, and Hāna;
- Continue workforce support and prevent burnout through Healing the Healers and other professional development;
- Reach thousands of residents with public education materials promoting protective factors and community resources; and
- Coordinate over 75 partner organizations to fill gaps, share resources, and prevent duplication so that every dollar invested in Maui's families goes further.

This is not an investment in one program. It is an investment in a stronger, more connected system of care for all of Maui County. Please include a line item for Ho‘oikaika Partnership in the FY27 budget. When we invest in prevention, we reduce long-term costs, strengthen our workforce, and ensure that all our keiki and ‘ohana are healthy, safe, and supported.

Mahalo nui for your time and consideration.

Deb Marois, Coordinator

On behalf of Ho‘oikaika Partnership

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