

## BFED Committee

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**From:** County Clerk  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 2, 2026 1:37 PM  
**To:** BFED Committee  
**Subject:** Fw: 2027 Budget Session Written Testimony  
**Attachments:** MEDB STEMworks Testimony.pdf

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**From:** Sofia Kloft Hibbard <sofiakh4608@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 2, 2026 1:22 PM  
**To:** County Clerk <County.Clerk@mauicounty.us>  
**Subject:** 2027 Budget Session Written Testimony

You don't often get email from sofiakh4608@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)  
Good afternoon,

Attached is a written testimony in support of MEDB STEMworks for the upcoming Maui County Council 2027 Budget Session

Thanks,  
Sofia Kloft Hibbard

Testimony: MEDB STEMworks

Maui County Council 2027 Budget Session - April 16, 2026

My name is Sofia Kloft Hibbard, and I have been fortunate to receive valuable opportunities from Maui Economic Development Board's STEMworks program. In my Junior year of high school, a friend recommended to me a program I hadn't heard about, MEDB STEMworks Ag Business & Technology Internships, so I applied to be an intern for Fall 2024. Despite never being particularly interested in agriculture, I decided to take a chance and interned at a small local farm, Noho'ana Farm. That fall, I gained knowledge of numerous traditional Hawaiian agricultural systems, native plants, food production, cultural connections, and educational programs that benefitted the community. It was a type of hard work and hands-on learning that I didn't previously have, and kept me coming back for the Summer and Fall 2026 internships.

I was able to foster relationships with people I never expected to meet, and had the opportunity to feel that I was a part of something bigger through programs that provided food, education, and service project hours for the community, especially Maui's youth. Being an intern wasn't only fun and games, it left me with a greater sense of responsibility for both the farm and the land in general, and taught me to work hard in order to cultivate a sustainable environment for plants and animals that deserve the best from their native ecosystem.

I also was able to narrow down my career choices for my future, going from lightly considering studying architecture to being committed to seeking a civil and environmental

engineering degree. Through both my firsthand experiences and my mentor's valuable teaching, I learned about issues that made me want to work hard for a career that could bring me back to Hawai'i where I can help improve the urban design of the island in a way that works with the environment, not against it. With environmental issues on the rise worldwide, interning in agriculture drove my passion to do something bigger, and at the same time, I was able to take small actions that had a big impact at Noho'ana Farm.

The internship program is something that I find myself recommending to many students and was an impactful opportunity that should continue for as many people as possible. Additionally, I attended the 2025 STEM conference—and plan to attend the 2026 conference this April—where I gained information and competitive experience having to do with STEM-based occupations, activities, and speakers, furthering my interest in pursuing a career in STEM. Funding for STEMworks is needed in order to keep local youth interested in STEM, technology, business, and agriculture, and to help as many students as possible experiment with different passions and professions. This is an opportunity that will keep driving Maui County's youth to go far in careers and hobbies that benefit themselves, as well as the land and businesses in need.

MAUI COUNTY COUNCIL BUDGET HEARING THURSDAY 2 APRIL 2026 PA'IA

ALOHA MAUI COUNTY COUNCIL: .... my name is NIKHILANANDA, a 39 year resident of Maui, including the last 28 years as a property owner in Huelo.

I have been coming to these Budget hearings for 33 years and usually bring my "laundry list" of issues I wish to support. Sadly, most have been ignored; never implemented plus I do not expect to see much change in the future.

Nevertheless, before the Federal Government outlaws our 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment right of free speech, I will once again share a few thoughts. However, rather than include my ~~usual~~ usual laundry list of issues, I will limit my comments to what I feel are the most pressing. I will submit my testimony, including those issues, for documentation and historical sake.

We have major crises.

It is time to wrestle control from former plantation companies, now major multi-national land developers, of our water. No private entity should own the water we need for survival. This led to some of the destruction in Lahaina. People have died waiting on the meter lists for scores of years upcountry. The same is true with those awaiting leases on Hawaiian Home Lands. It is long overdue to change these situations.

Hundreds of residents on Maui are houseless; unsheltered and homeless, living on the streets, in shelters, in vehicles, on relative's and friend's couches. This has been exacerbated by the destruction in Lahaina and the fires in Kula. We can ~~not~~ and must stop using strong-arm tactics, championed by our current Federal government and have a humanitarian, compassionate, Hawaiian and Maui response to this horrendous situation! They are residents, friends, family and members of our community. Many need mental, medical and emotional support from too few social service programs and resources. We must stop the attacks on those attempting to survive on Holomua road, Pulehu road and numerous other locations in our community.

Now we are dealing with the recent storms which points out our terrible planning with infrastructure, wetlands protection and maintenance of upcountry flood mitigation projects.

We also have an equally unacceptable situation, both for rent and purchase, of housing which a majority of residents can afford. We now have numerous billionaires, including one of the wealthiest <sup>people</sup> ~~person~~ on the planet owning the entire island of Lanai, plus many other super uber wealthy part-time residents. It is imperative to seek legal and constitutional methods to have them share in their wealth, either through reforming our property tax system or by some other legal means. The tiered property tax system, and item I championed and testified to for years, has finally <sup>been</sup> ~~be~~ established and must be expanded and can be adjusted for non-residents, multi property owners, absentee home owners and implementing other creative, legal and ingenious methods. Some estimates are as high as thirty percent of homes on Maui are empty and uninhabited much of the year.

Before I die, I would like to see a pickle-ball & tennis court constructed for the north shore resident population at the 4<sup>th</sup> Marine Park on Kokomo Road in Ha'iku. Mahalo

ADDITIONAL ISSUES/ITEMS

- 1-EXPAND THE TIERED PROPERTY TAX SYSTEM. Raise property tax on 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> 4<sup>th</sup> homes and non-residents; or give a break to residents; whichever is more legal!
- 2-EXPAND THE RESIDENTIAL CURB-SIDE RECYCLING SYSTEM [charging per container].
- 3-BUILD A FEW MATERIAL RECLAMATION FACILITIES around Maui County. Too much usable items go into the landfill; will expand life of site
- 4-EXPAND MAUI BUS SYSTEM, including makawao-pa'ia-ha'iku shuttle route. - retire gas buses and purchase electric/hybrid buses to replace them.
- 5-REMODEL MAUI COUNTY COUNCIL CHAMBERS SO COUNCIL MEMBERS DO NOT HAVE THEIR BACKS TO THE COMMUNITY!
- 6-ESTABLISH "ALOHA ZONES" FOR HOUSELESS/UNSHELTERED, including those living in vehicles, with various social services and personal hygiene facilities.

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*Pa'ia meeting*

7-UNLOCK MAUI COUNTY BEACH PARK GATES; allow access 24/7.

8-MAINTAIN COUNTY PARK BATHROOMS, INCLUDING KEEPING OPEN 24/7.

9-CHANGE ZONING LAWS TO ALLOW BUILDING UP A COUPLE OF STORIES FOR RENTALS/PURCHASE WHERE APPROPRIATE; WITH RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES UPSTAIRS AND COMMERCIAL FACILITIES ON FIRST/GROUND FLOOR.

10-HAVE MORE OFFICIAL MAUI COUNTY GOVERNMENT HEARINGS OUT IN THE COMMUNITY IN THE EVENINGS SO MORE RESIDENTS CAN ATTEND/TESTIFY.

11-SUPPORT AND WORK WITH THE STATE TO MAKE ELECTION DAY A HOLIDAY, WHILE ALSO INSTITUTING A RANKED-CHOICE VOTING ELECTORAL SYSTEM.

12-EXPAND THE BRIGHTLY FLASHING LIGHTS ON MAJOR ROAD CROSSWALKS.

13-KEEP EXPANDING AND FUNDING PEDESTRIAN/BICYCLE/EQUESTRIAN TRAILS AND PATHS.

14-EXPANDED PLUS ADDITIONAL COUNTY PARKING LOTS IN ALL OF THE SMALL TOWNS AND REGIONS OF MAUI COUNTY.

15-SUPPORT ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR AFFORDABLE LAND TRUST.

16-CONGRATS ON PUTTING UP AHUPUA'A/MOKU SIGNS; NOW HAVE MORE SIGNAGE IN BOTH HAWAIIAN AND ENGLISH.

17-CONTINUE USING NON-TOXIC ORGANIC WEED SPRAYING WHILE PHASING OUT ALL USES OF POISONOUS WEED CONTROL ITEMS.

18-INCREASE FUNDING FOR SOCIAL SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE COUNTY

19-KEEP PUSHING AND SUPPORTING FOR BOTH THE PA'IA AND LAHAINA ALTERNATIVE ROUTE PROJECTS.

20-SINCE 1992 I HAVE BEEN REQUESTING A COUPLE OF TENNIS COURTS BE BUILT AT THE 4TH MARINE PARK ON KOKOMO ROAD IN HA'IKU; THERE IS PLENTY OF SPACE WITHOUT TAKING AWAY FROM OTHER BALL FIELDS. NOW SUGGEST ONE TENNIS & ONE PICKLEBALL COURT. [less wind then pa'ia]

21-INSTITUTE A MORATORIUM ON APROVING THE FUNDING & BUILDING OF HIGH-END AG SUBDIVISIONS; WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY BUILDING MORE AFFORDABLE RENTAL UNITS AND HOMES FOR PURCHASE.

22-DELETE ALL ANTI-CANNABIS POLICE FUNDIN-G AND PLACE THOSE MONIES INTO SOCIAL SERVICES AND/OR EXPAND ANTI-COCK FIGHTING INVESTIGATIONS

23-ESTABLISH A SUB-COMMITTE to review possibly instituting a single member district county council system; perhaps expanding the Maui County Council to 11 members.

Submitted by

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## Meeting 04/02/26

Robert Street <hokuoihe@gmail.com>  
Draft To: Robert Street <hokuoihe@gmail.com>

Thu, Apr 2, 2026 at 10:20 AM

Alice Lee and Yuki Lei Sugimura

It wasn't your family that was involved in making hundreds of available affordable lots/house and lot packages, when Maui had an extremely low inventory of housing while transitioning from an agrarian society to a service society.

It wasn't your family that put in Fee Simple Industrial zone lots, when none were available, so that Kupa Aina, Kama'aina, Kanaka Maoli could compete in a capitalistic society.

The ILWU didn't go to both of your families seeking land so they could build affordable housing for their members.

It's known as Vertical, Integrated, Political, Cooperation. This is the recipe that has eluded 200 High Street over several administrations.

What happened within Historic District 3 was nothing short of dishonest, unethical, and criminal in nature. And by omission you Ms. Lee as well as Ms. Sugimura, both of you participated in this Pilau this Hewa. If I said it once I would say it again ( I'll be raw about it ) - Lesly Dean Wong is nothing more than a transplanted, occidental, malahini, from america who could care less about OUR history. He has No morals, No values, No Ethics and Spiritual Void and he is using the kamali'i, opio to further his cult like operation. From experience he is a Cultural Hater. Look at him as a cross between Ronald Rewald and David Koresh.

The Na Wai Eha is more than deserving of an HONEST RESPONSE from both you. Ms. Lee not only do you REPRESENT this district you are the CHAIRPERSON of the county council. To try and minimize, trivialize than dismiss than gaslighting this issue speaks volumes about your character

To Ms. Paltin, Bill Number 29 (2026) agenda item of the regular council meeting of 03/06/26 is a classic example of the devious behavior of Lesly Dean Wong riding and hiding on the coattails of other worthy causes. His request should have been a stand alone agenda item.

Out of all of this Corporation Council has shown that it is extremely Unethical while the Planning Department is Dysfunctional to the nth degree.

RECEIVED AT *BFED* MEETING ON *4/2/26*

*Rai'a meeting*

*Submitted by Robert Street*

## 19.52.020 - Review of plans.

- A. For any building or structure within any historic district established in this article, and for any building or structure of historic significance in the Lahaina Historic District (National Historic Landmark), the cultural resources commission shall have the authority to approve all plans.
- B. Application for an appropriate permit to construct, alter, repair, modify, move or demolish any building or structure in the historic districts established in this article, or any building or structure of historic significance in the Lahaina Historic District (National Historic Landmark), shall be made to the director of public works. The director of public works shall immediately notify the chair of the cultural resources commission of the receipt of the application and shall transmit it together with accompanying plans and other information to the cultural resources commission. The cultural resources commission may delegate the approval of certain minor applications to the planning director pursuant to the cultural resources commission's rules of practice and procedure.
- C. The cultural resources commission shall meet within ninety days after notification by the director of public works of the filing of the application, unless otherwise mutually agreed upon by the applicant and cultural resources commission, and shall review the plans according to procedures as set forth in this article.
- D. The cultural resources commission shall approve or disapprove such plans and, if approved, shall issue a letter of approval signed by the chair of the cultural resources commission, or the chair's designee, and attached to the application for a building permit, and immediately transmit it to the director of public works.
- E. If the cultural resources commission disapproves such plans, it shall state its reasons for doing so and shall transmit a record of such action and reasons in writing to the director of public works, and the applicant. The cultural resources commission may advise the applicant what it thinks is proper if it disapproves the plans submitted. The applicant may make modifications to the plans and shall have the right to resubmit the application at any time after so doing. The decision of the cultural resources commission to disapprove such plans shall be considered a final decision of the cultural resources commission that is appealable under section 91-14, Hawai'i Revised Statutes.
- F. The failure of the cultural resources commission to approve or disapprove such plans within ninety days from the date of submittal of a complete application for the building permit, unless otherwise mutually agreed upon by the applicant and the cultural resources

commission, shall be deemed to constitute approval and the director of public works shall proceed to process the application without regard to a letter of approval.

- G. Within any historic district established in this article, and for any building or structure of historic significance in the Lahaina Historic District (National Historic Landmark), the director of public works shall not approve a building or demolition permit application unless a letter of approval has been issued by the cultural resources commission or the plans have been deemed approved pursuant to subsection 19.52.020(F).
- H. For the purposes of this article, buildings or structures of historic significance shall be those that are more than fifty years old and that are deemed by the State historic preservation officer to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, based on federal criteria.

(Ord. No. 4026, § 10, 2013; Ord. 757 § 1(b), 1973; prior code § 8-3.7)