

BFED Committee

From: Christina Kaea-Medley <christina.kaea.medley@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 15, 2026 12:27 AM
To: BFED Committee; County Clerk
Cc: Kaea-Medley, Ronald
Subject: Strong Support for Continued Funding of the Farmers Apprenticeship Mentoring (FAM) Program – Maui County Budget FY2027

You don't often get email from christina.kaea.medley@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Subject: Strong Support for Continued Funding of the Farmers Apprenticeship Mentoring (FAM) Program – Maui County Budget FY2027

Aloha Chair and Members of the Maui County Council,

I am writing in strong support of continued funding for the Farmers Apprenticeship Mentoring (FAM) Program through the Hawai'i Farmers Union. I am currently a participant in FAM Cohort 11 with Maui County.

Participating in the FAM program has been a truly foundational experience in my family's journey to build a small, regenerative farm here on Maui. As new farmers, there is no substitute for guidance, mentorship, and education that is both practical and rooted in local knowledge...and FAM provides exactly that!!

One of the most impactful aspects of this program is its structure. FAM combines a classroom-style learning environment where we gain a strong foundation in agricultural principles as well as hands-on training at real farm operations. This approach allows us to immediately apply what we are learning in real-world settings, building both skill and confidence.

The farmer mentors are truly exceptional. They share their knowledge generously and lead with passion, creating an environment where we feel supported and inspired. Their genuine investment in our success makes a lasting impact and helps ensure that new farmers like us have a real chance to succeed.

Through this program, we have gained not only technical skills, but also the confidence to take meaningful steps forward: planting with intention, restoring our land, and working toward a future that contributes to local food resilience and community well-being. From managing invasive species to understanding soil health and crop planning, the lessons we are learning directly shape the success and sustainability of our farm.

For six years, my husband and I talked about starting a small farm on our property. The FAM program gave us the knowledge, skills, and confidence to finally begin that journey. Thanks to FAM, we are now finally, actively working to establish a diverse orchard, support native plant restoration, and create opportunities for cultural education through farming. None of this progress would be possible without the support and structure that the FAM program provides.

Programs like FAM are critical to the future of agriculture on Maui. They empower new farmers, strengthen local food systems, and help ensure that knowledge is passed on in a way that is accessible and community-centered. Investing in FAM is an investment in the next generation of farmers and in the long-term resilience of our island.

As a mother of three raising the next generation on this land, this program is not just education, it is shaping our family's future and our ability to steward this 'āina responsibly. My children have helped plant every fruit tree at our family farm including bananas, avocados, mango, guava, 'ulu, and more—along with nearly a dozen native Hawaiian plants, with the hope of one day helping restore native Hawaiian ecosystems.

I respectfully urge the Maui County Council to continue funding the FAM program for FY2027.

Mahalo for your time, consideration, and continued support of Maui's farming community.

With gratitude,
Christina Kaea-Medley

FAM Cohort 11
Maui, Hawai'i

E mālama i ka 'āina, a e mālama ka 'āina iā kākou.
Care for the land, and the land will care for us.

BFED Committee

From: Ronald Kaea-Medley <ronald.kaea.medley@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 15, 2026 12:33 AM
To: BFED Committee; County Clerk
Cc: Christina Kaea-Medley
Subject: Re: Strong Support for Continued Funding of the Farmers Apprenticeship Mentoring (FAM) Program – Maui County Budget FY2027

You don't often get email from ronald.kaea.medley@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Aloha Chair and Members of the Maui County Council,

I echo my wife Christina's testimony (*below*) in strong support of continued funding for the Farmers Apprenticeship Mentoring (FAM) Program. I am also part of FAM Cohort 11. This program has been a huge part of helping our family go from talking about farming to actually getting started. The mix of classroom learning, hands-on farm days, and support from the mentors has made a real difference for us. FAM is helping grow the next generation of farmers, and we're grateful to be part of it. I respectfully ask for your continued support and funding for this program.

Mahalo for your time and consideration,
Ronald Kaea-Medley, Cohort 11

On Wed, Apr 15, 2026 at 12:26 AM Christina Kaea-Medley <christina.kaea.medley@gmail.com> wrote:

Subject: Strong Support for Continued Funding of the Farmers Apprenticeship Mentoring (FAM) Program – Maui County Budget FY2027

Aloha Chair and Members of the Maui County Council,

I am writing in strong support of continued funding for the Farmers Apprenticeship Mentoring (FAM) Program through the Hawai'i Farmers Union. I am currently a participant in FAM Cohort 11 with Maui County.

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I respectfully urge the Maui County Council to continue funding the FAM program for FY2027.

Mahalo for your time, consideration, and continued support of Maui's farming community.

With gratitude,
Christina Kaea-Medley

FAM Cohort 11
Maui, Hawai'i

E mālama i ka 'āina, a e mālama ka 'āina iā kākou.
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BFED Committee

From: Dominique Linden <linden.dominique@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 15, 2026 10:19 AM
To: County Clerk; BFED Committee
Subject: Farm Apprenticeship Mentorship - FAM program - written testimony

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Aloha,

To whom it may concern, I would like to share my sincere testimony of how much I have gotten out of the FAM program. The materials, hands on learning, and community in action activities have been truly wonderful and enriching.

I will be able to grow food to feed myself, family and community. I have made connections for being able to give my compost to a farm mentor's pigs, mentor with a permaculture designer and move to a farmer's property to help create even more food to share.

I feel with the state of the world this program is critical, and am sending this in the hopes the program will continue.

Thank you,

Dominique Linden

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

BFED Committee

From: Malia Davidson <malia@kumukahikealoha.org>
Sent: Wednesday, April 15, 2026 12:12 PM
To: BFED Committee; County Clerk
Cc: Sara Gilligan; Paulo Faleafine
Subject: Budget Testimony Support for FAM program

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Aloha Chair Sugimura and Members of the Maui County Council,

I am writing in strong support of the Farmer Apprentice Mentoring (FAM) Program offered by the Hawaii Farmers Union United. As a participant in the 11th cohort, I can say with confidence that this program provides one of the most comprehensive and grounded pathways for individuals committed to building successful and sustainable small farms in Hawai'i.

The FAM Program delivers practical, real-world education that extends far beyond theory. From soil development to harvest, and from navigating wind, rain, and sun to managing weeds, animals, and insects, we are trained to work within the full reality of our island environment. This program does not romanticize farming—it prepares us for it with honesty, depth, and care.

What makes this cohort especially powerful is the diversity of its participants. Approximately half of our cohort are new to farming. Many come with a love for gardening, a desire to care for animals, or simply a deep internal calling to this work—often with little to no prior experience. The other half bring years of experience, generational knowledge, established relationships with land, and in some cases, access to land itself.

This range creates a highly dynamic and effective learning environment. We actively support one another. Each gathering reveals who carries specific expertise, who asks the questions shaped by lived experience, and who introduces new ways of thinking. There are questions asked in this space that some of us would not yet know to ask on our own. This is where real growth happens.

Our cohort reflects the broader fabric of Maui. It includes individuals who have lived here their entire lives and those who have come from away and now call Maui home. There are those who have traveled globally and those deeply rooted in place-based knowledge who are working to sustain and expand their farms. Together, we form a network grounded in shared purpose, mutual respect, and collective responsibility.

This experience directly informs and strengthens the work my ohana is building in Waiohuli Homestead through *Malama Nā Pua program* an agricultural and wellness initiative under the nonprofit Kumukahi Ke Aloha. Our focus is not only on food production, but on cultivating relationships—between people, land, and community. The FAM Program reinforces this approach by connecting us with experienced farmers and area experts whose mentorship is essential. These relationships are not supplemental—they are foundational to success.

Farming is a labor of love and service. It requires resilience, adaptability, and long-term commitment. The early years are particularly challenging, and the likelihood of success without proper guidance is low. Programs like FAM significantly increase the chances of success by providing access to mentorship, shared knowledge, and a supportive network that helps farmers think critically, solve problems effectively, and remain inspired.

We must also acknowledge the environmental realities of farming in Hawai'i. The conditions we face—shifting weather patterns, strong winds, variable rainfall, pests, and regional microclimates—require constant observation and adaptation. The ability to share insights across districts, to understand what others are experiencing, and to learn collectively is essential to our long-term viability.

This program benefits far beyond the individual participant. It strengthens families, builds community resilience, and contributes directly to local food security. It is a critical piece of ensuring that Hawai'i can sustain itself.

We must also consider our geographic limitations. There are only so many barges that can reach our shores, yet we live in one of the most fertile and abundant environments in the world. Investing in local agriculture is not optional—it is necessary.

We are all in this together. I respectfully ask for the Council's support in nurturing this work—not only for current participants, but as part of a broader succession plan for future generations. Only through hands-on experience—working the land, caring for animals, and engaging in holistic, place-based practices—will we be able to navigate the challenges ahead.

Programs like FAM are essential to building that future. They cultivate knowledge, strengthen networks, and empower individuals to contribute meaningfully to our communities.

I strongly urge continued and increased support for the FAM Program. Supporting our farmers is an investment in the health, resilience, and sustainability of Hawai'i.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

O wau me ka ha'aha'a,
Malia Davidson-Faleafine

BFED Committee

From: Kelly Donnelly <kellydonnelly27@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 15, 2026 9:38 PM
To: BFED Committee; Sara Gilligan
Subject: FAM testimony for 4/16 budget meeting

[You don't often get email from kellydonnelly27@gmail.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification>]

Aloha,

I am a 2025 FAM graduate and I am not exaggerating when I say FAM changed my life. The value of this program for not only myself but the community, is something I can't quantify. The resources, knowledge, connections, and opportunities that this program creates are immeasurable. I am so grateful for its existence, for the leadership of it, and all of the participants—from mentors to students. It's truly one of the most enriching experiences I've had and has connected me to the land and people of Maui in a profound way. It is such a necessary program for our community and the fact that it is free makes it accessible to all. Learning about how to steward and care for the land is something that should be communal and available to everyone. My hope is that FAM is used as a model for other programs in the future on how we can come together and learn from one another for the betterment of our island. The āina needs sustainably focused caretakers now more than ever, and most of us didn't grow up learning these ways. It is vital to the perpetuation of this knowledge that it remain accessible without barriers like high costs or exclusivity. Farming is a labor of love, it's hard to get started and it's hard to stay motivated. In my experience, if you are going to work with/for the land your heart has to be in it . Often that passion requires ignition and inspiration, which is exactly what FAM does. It also provides a network of real-life growers to reach out to when that motivation wavers or you need guidance on next steps. Farming is an industry that thrives when we support one another and share collectively. I hope FAM receives even more funding than it has in the past so we can all continue to GROW.

Mahalo,
Kelly Donnelly

BFED Committee

From: Linn Nishikawa <linn@lnamaui.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 16, 2026 4:52 PM
To: BFED Committee
Subject: Support for Lights for Lahaina – April 17, 2026

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Aloha Chair and Members of the Maui County Council,

My name is Linn Nishikawa, Vice President of Aloha Amplified, Inc., a Maui-based nonprofit organization, and I respectfully ask for your support of our 2026 Lights for Lahaina event.

Lights for Lahaina was created as a heartfelt response to what our island has been experiencing – to offer a space in Lahaina where people can come together in a way that feels meaningful, supportive, and grounded. While it was inspired by the need to support Lahaina following the August 8, 2023 wildfire, its purpose has continued to evolve as many navigate ongoing challenges, including the recent Kona storms.

In 2025, more than 850 people participated in Lights for Lahaina through both in-person attendance and outreach activities. In the months leading up to the event, we reached out to schools, organizations, and community groups in West Maui, providing over 1,000 lantern-making kits so they could create their own activities within classrooms and community spaces. These efforts encouraged children and families to reflect on their own stories, memories, and messages of hope, offering a meaningful way to take part in the experience – whether or not they attended the event. View our event video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tWmwKKQKnIw>

For many, the September 6, 2025 event marked their first time returning to Lahaina. What we witnessed was powerful – people reconnecting with place, with one another, and with their own memories. It was emotional, but it also created a sense of comfort and belonging.

In 2026, we will build on this foundation by expanding Lights for Lahaina into a two-day experience. The first evening, “Our Lahaina Story,” will take place at Maria Lanakila Catholic Church and will feature live local entertainment, favorite local foods, cultural practitioners, keiki activities, talk story reflections, and interactive creative experiences. The second evening will include the Light March beginning at Pu‘unoa Beach, moving through Lahaina Town in a respectful procession, and concluding at Maria Lanakila Catholic Church, where participants carry light in reflection, unity, and hope.

Building on last year’s outreach efforts, we will again connect with schools, organizations, and community groups in West Maui – expanding opportunities to include creative activities rooted in aloha and ways to heal through art. These activities will provide additional ways for individuals and families to reflect, express, and process their experiences, while strengthening connections beyond the event itself.

The rebuilding of Lahaina will happen – homes will be built, businesses will return, and physical spaces will be restored. Alongside that, however, is a longer and more personal journey of healing for individuals, families, and the community as a whole. That process often extends well beyond physical rebuilding, as each person continues to navigate their own path forward.

Creating opportunities for people to come together during this time is essential. Events like Lights for Lahaina provide a space to reconnect, share stories, and simply be in the presence of one another. These moments remind people they are not alone, and that sense of connection plays a meaningful role in healing – not just individually, but collectively.

Aloha Amplified, Inc. respectfully requests \$40,000 in FY 2026–2027 County funding to support Lights for Lahaina, taking place September 11-12, 2026.

With your support, this free event will continue to provide a safe and welcoming space for our island, while inviting others to stand with Lahaina in a respectful and meaningful way.

Mahalo for your thoughtful consideration.

Linn Nishikawa
Vice President
Aloha Amplified, Inc.

569 Kulaiwi Drive
Wailuku, HI 96793
808-281-0810

BFED Committee

From: Kamaunu Kahaialii <kamaunu@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 16, 2026 4:56 PM
To: BFED Committee
Subject: LIGHTS FOR LĀHAINA 2026

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Aloha Chair and Members of the Maui County Council,

My name is Wilmont Kamaunu Kahaiali'i, Board President of Aloha Amplified, Inc., a Maui-based nonprofit organization, and I respectfully ask for your support of our 2026 Lights for Lahaina event.

Lahaina is not just where I am from – it is home. It is where my family's roots are grounded, where generations before me have lived, and where our stories will continue. In the August 8, 2023 wildfire, my 'ohana lost our home. Like many in our community, we continue to navigate that loss while finding ways to move forward with strength and purpose.

Through Aloha Amplified, our 'ohana has remained committed to creating spaces where our community can come together – to talk story, to reconnect, and to continue healing in ways that feel natural and rooted in who we are.

Lights for Lahaina was created from that need. In 2025, we saw firsthand the impact of bringing people together and returning to Lahaina. For many, it was their first time back. It was emotional, but also meaningful—a step forward.

In 2026, we are expanding the event into a two-day experience to deepen that connection. The first evening, "Our Lahaina Story," will take place at Maria Lanakila Catholic Church, bringing together music, food, storytelling, and creative, interactive activities that reflect the connections that shape our community. The second evening will feature the Light March beginning at Pu'unoa Beach, moving through Lahaina Town in a respectful procession, and concluding at Maria Lanakila Catholic Church, where participants carry light in reflection, unity, and hope.

Aloha Amplified, Inc. respectfully requests \$40,000 in FY 2026–2027 County funding to support Lights for Lahaina, taking place September 11-12, 2026.

With your support, this free event will provide a safe and welcoming space for our community, while inviting others to stand with Lahaina in a respectful and meaningful way.

Mahalo for your thoughtful consideration.

Wilmont Kamaunu Kahaiali'i

Board President
Aloha Amplified, Inc.

808-283-9655
P.O. Box 12862
Lahaina, HI 96762

