

BFED Committee

From: Kapali Keahi <kapali@lahainacommunitylandtrust.org>
Sent: Friday, April 17, 2026 3:13 PM
To: BFED Committee
Subject: BFED -1

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Aloha Chair, Vice-Chair, and Honorable Members of the Budget and Finance Committee,

Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to testify today, and for your continued service to the people of Maui during one of the most consequential periods in the Hawaiian Kingdom's history.

We come before you first in deep gratitude. Mahalo for your leadership in the wake of the August 2023 fires, for your commitment to keeping Lahaina families rooted, and for your recognition that recovery must be more than rebuilding structures. It must be about restoring community. The Lahaina Community Land Trust stands as a partner in that shared mission.

Our work is simple in concept, but profound in impact: to ensure that the lands of Lahaina remain in Lahaina hands-protected, stewarded, and passed forward to future generations- at a time when outside investment pressures have long threatened to displace local families. And because the fires accelerated that vulnerability overnight, the role of community-based land stewardship is no longer optional. It is essential.

We recognize and appreciate the County's support of innovative housing solutions and community-driven models. The Community Land Trust model is one such solution- one that creates permanent affordability, prevents speculative resale, and anchors families to place- not just for today, but for generations.

This is not just housing policy. This is legacy.

The decisions made by this Council in this moment will define how Maui is remembered. Whether we allowed Lahaina to become another cautionary tale of displacement, or whether we stood together to protect it as a living, thriving community rooted in its people and its history. Continued support for the Lahaina Community Land Trust is an opportunity for the County to affirm that legacy. It is an opportunity to invest in a model that keeps land in community control, that multiplies the impact of public dollars over time, and that aligns directly with the values we all share: stability, equity, and mālama 'āina.

We do not come asking the County to act alone. We come as partners, ready to leverage resources, relationships, and community trust to ensure that every dollar invested yields lasting benefit.

But partnership requires commitment.

We respectfully urge the County of Maui to continue, and where possible, deepen its support for the Lahaina Community Land Trust. These investments will not only address today's housing crisis, but will

help ensure that Lahaina remains Lahaina for generations to come.

In closing, mahalo again for your leadership, your listening, and your willingness to walk this path with the community. The work ahead is not easy, but it is clear. Let us be the generation that chose to protect Lahaina- its people- its story.

Mahalo nui loa for your time and consideration.

Me ke aloha,
Kapali Keahi - LCLT Board Member

FY27 West Maui Budget Items Included in the Mayor's Proposal

- Affordable Housing Fund:
 - Reclassification of a prior purchase of 14.99 acres from Open Space Fund in the amount **\$1,434,557** for the Kaiaulu O Napili Affordable Housing project. *(II.Special Purpose Revenues, Page 47)*
 - **Up to \$2,461,000** must be for a grant to Lahaina Community Land Trust for the From Ashes, 'Aina: LCLT Fire Recovery Vertical Construction Project. *(II.Special Purpose Revenues, Page 47)*
 - **Up to \$10,000,000** must be for a loan to A0746 Lahaina, L.P., for Kaiaulu O Napili 153 Project located in Napili, Maui, Hawai'i. The project will serve households at 30-120 percent of (AMI), thirty-three (33) homes (three and four bedroom) with rent-to-own options after fifteen years, seventy two (72) multifamily apartments (two to four bedroom), and forty eight senior apartments (one and two bedroom). TMK: (2)4-3-001:096 (portion). The loan will bear interest at a rate of 0.25 percent per year after repayment obligations to the rental housing revolving funds have been satisfied. *(II.Special Purpose Revenues, Page 50)*
- Hawaiian Cultural Restoration Revolving Fund (to become the Lahaina Royal Complex Restoration Revolving Fund) : Total- \$1,173,825
 - Must provide funds for the preservation and restoration of Lahaina Royal Complex sites and artifacts relating to Moku'ula and Mokuhinia, and Kamehameha III School and library areas makai of Front Street. *(II.Special Purpose Revenues, Page 52)*
- Open Space, Natural Resources, Cultural Resources, and Scenic Views Preservation Fund:
 - **Up to \$300,000** must be for debt service for the purchase of approximately 148 acres at Launiupoko, Maui, Hawai'i, TMK: (2) 4-7-001-030. *(II.Special Purpose Revenues, Page 56)*
 - **Up to \$741,125** must be for the Trust for Public Land for the acquisition of parcels totaling approximately 17.8 acres located at Kā'anapali, Honolua, Maui, Hawai'i, TMKs: (2) 4-1-001:006, 019, and 4-2-001:004 and 4-2-004:032. *(II.Special Purpose Revenues, Page 56)*
- Department of Environmental Management-Environmental Protection and Sustainability Program:
 - **Up to \$300,000** must be for West Maui Green Cycle LLC.
 - Go Green West Maui Recycling: \$240,000

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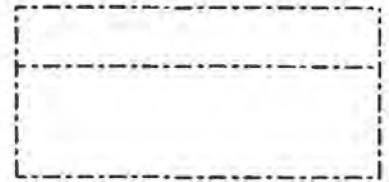
(West Maui)

*Submitted by Councilmember
Palatin*

- Department of Management-Office of Recovery:
 - **Up to \$9,790,000** must be for The Lahaina Restoration Foundation to rebuild the Old Lahaina Courthouse, the Old Lahaina Prison.
 - **Up to \$250,000** must be for Lahaina Town Action Committee for incubation of displaced businesses.
 - Grant to J. Walter Cameron Center West Maui: **\$180,000**
- Office of the Mayor- Grants Division Program
 - Grant to Lahainatown Action Committee: **\$75,000**
- Department of Parks and Recreation:
 - Grant to The Lahaina Restoration Foundation: **\$191,000**
- Department of Water Supply:
 - Grant for Honokōwai/Wahikuli Watershed: **\$126,000**
 - Grant for Pu'u Kukui Watershed Preserve: **\$500,000**
 - Grant for Mauna Kahālāwai Watershed: **\$1,235,535**
- **Capital Improvement Projects:**
 - West Maui Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Compliance Sewer Rehabilitation: **\$2,000,000**
 - Collection and Materials Management Infrastructure for Recycling in West Maui: **\$2,150,000**
 - *County will acquire two strategically located parcels on the upper West side and develop two collection centers for green waste, recyclables, and large and bulky items.*
 - Olowalu Fire Station Improvements: **\$200,000**
 - West Maui Land Acquisition Development and Infrastructure Improvements: **\$3,000,000**
 - Lahaina Aquatic Center Rehabilitation: **\$4,250,000**
 - New Lahaina Community Center: **\$1,200,000**
 - West Maui Transit Center: **\$ 800,000**



COUNTY OF MAUI
Office of the Mayor
Fiscal Year 2027
Community Budget Request



PLEASE PRINT

Name: MAY LENH CANETE

Email Address: CANETEMAYLENH@YAHOO.COM

Phone: (808) 419-0811

Mailing Address: 148 IPUKULA WAY

City/Zip: LAHAINA HI. 96761

I Represent: Myself
 Organization MEO Head Start

Request/Issue: I want to express my sincerest appreciation to the County of Maui for funding MEO Headstart. It has been a huge help to families like ours to be able to bring our keikis to preschool, especially for those who cannot afford it. My child Zach Spade has been attending MEO Headstart for two (2) years now. Our lives have become easier since then. Not only do we have a place we can trust to care for our children while we work, but they also learn so much. It is a big help in shaping our children's characters and minds before they enter elementary school.

I am humbly requesting that the County of Maui keep funding this organization in hopes of continuing full-day / full-year services for our enrolled Head Start families.

Funding Request (if known): \$ _____

Responsible County Department: Human Concerns



April 17, 2026

SUBJECT: Maui County FY2024 Budget Testimony

Good evening, Council Chair Lee, Vice Chair Sugimura, and Members of the Maui County Council.

My name is Rick Nava, and I serve as Executive Director of the West Maui Taxpayers' Association.

The mayor's proposed budget of \$1.616 billion reflects an increase of \$60 million or 3.8% from previous fiscal year.

Residents of Maui County are already facing significant financial challenges, living in one of the most expensive State in the nation. Any additional cost on service fees and increase tax rates would place further pressure on our families. Many of us are struggling to keep up with the rising cost of living and many more have no choice but to leave families and friends behind and move out of Maui.

Gasoline prices have now surpassed \$5 per gallon, with no clear indication of a decrease, placing additional strain on our lives.

There's also State Bill 2694 that, if approved, would authorize *Young Brothers* to increase their shipping rates by 5% in each of the next two years, with the option to seek further rate adjustments before the PUC in the third year. These increased costs will ultimately be passed on to consumers—impacting all of us.

We cannot continue to absorb ongoing increases in annual budgets without experiencing significant impacts on our financial well-being. WMTA believes that the proposed budget increase will add more financial burden on all of us.

On another note, recently, my family and other residents of Kelaweia Mauka III were unable to leave our homes for 48 hours due to several sinkholes from the storms. This situation reflects ongoing infrastructure that has not been addressed for decades.

Maintaining roads, drainage, and flood control systems are not optional projects, they are fundamental obligations. Preventive maintenance is far more cost-effective than emergency repairs—and far less disruptive to our safety and lives.

According to the mayor's proposed budget, it includes \$79.5 million for the county's *Affordable Housing Fund* to support ten projects that will bring approximately six hundred new units. It would be helpful to know how many of these units will benefit the residents of Lahaina, and how these efforts align with the more than \$903 million in CDBG-DR housing funds.

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(West Maui)

West Maui Taxpayers Association, Inc.

PO Box 10338, Lahaina, HI 96761 | WMTAinc@gmail.com | 808-661-7990 | www.westmaui.org



Also, mayor's proposed budget would establish a new hazard mitigation section within the MEMA, focused on wildfire risk reduction, infrastructure protection and more. Can these mitigations be supported through the \$214 million already set aside for mitigation under CDBG-DR?

In addition, we respectfully request funding for the following priority needs on West Maui:

- Traffic safety improvements along Keawe Street to reduce speeding and protect motorists and pedestrians.
- Pedestrian crosswalks with flashing pedestrian warning lights connecting Lahaina Gateway to nearby housing and shops across Keawe Street.
- Install flashing pedestrian warning lights at the Keawe Street crosswalk, parallel to Honoapiilani Highway, to improve motorists and pedestrians' safety.
- At Kelaweia Mauka Park, neighborhood children would benefit from the addition of safe, modern playground equipment and dedicated basketball courts to support recreation, physical activities, and community engagement.
- Additional or expanded bus shelters to support public transit.

These are essential community needs that directly impact the lives of West Maui residents.

\$25 million has been allocated for Public Services within the CDBG-DR program, which we believe is intended to support these improvements for our community. Accordingly, these items should not be included in the proposed County budget.

On behalf of WMTA, I respectfully appeal to all of you to take a close and careful look at opportunities to reduce County expenditure. We fully understand the importance of fiscal responsibility, especially during these challenging times.

However, we strongly believe that any cost-saving measures must be approached with great care. WMTA believes that HEALTH, SAFETY, and WELFARE of our residents are not just priorities, they are essential. These must never be compromised in the pursuit of budget reductions.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rick Nava', written in a cursive style.

Rick Nava
Executive Director
West Maui Taxpayers' Association

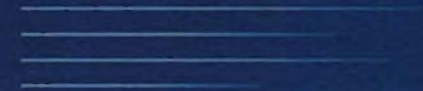
BUDGET ADVOCACY BRIEFING

West Maui Budget Priorities

A taxpayer-centered case for fiscal discipline, essential infrastructure, infrastructure, and accountable recovery spending.

Adapted from testimony submitted on behalf of the West Maui Taxpayers' Association, with official Maui County recovery-funding context added for policy framing.

Decision focus: protect residents, fund essentials, and scrutinize spending overlap.



AFFORDABILITY FIRST

Residents Are at the Breaking Point

The testimony anchors the budget debate in household reality: Maui families are already struggling, so new local cost pressure should face a very high burden of proof.

High

Residents are described as living in one of the nation's most expensive environments, with many already struggling to keep pace with daily costs.

>\$5

Gasoline prices had surpassed \$5 per gallon, adding immediate pressure to commuting, errands, and household budgets.

5% + 5%

The testimony also warns that proposed shipping-rate increases could be passed through to consumers, raising costs across the local economy.

Source: West Maui Taxpayers' Association testimony in provided PDF.

A Bigger Budget Needs a Stronger Justification

The testimony does not argue against government itself. It argues that new budget growth should be defended against a simple standard: is it essential, and is it the best use of local dollars?

\$1.616B

Proposed budget size cited in the testimony

A scale of spending large enough to demand sharper prioritization and public accountability.

+\$60M

Year-over-year increase described in the testimony

Residents are asked to absorb the effects of a larger plan while already facing high living costs.

+3.8%

Annual growth rate highlighted by WMTA

The advocacy question is whether that added burden is matched by indispensable community benefit.

Bottom line: if a spending increase cannot be tied to essential outcomes that are not otherwise fundable, it should face tougher scrutiny.

Source: West Maui Taxpayers' Association testimony in provided PDF.

Federal Recovery Funds Change the Equation

When large recovery funding is available, the County's role is to match each need to the right source of money.

\$1.6B

Maui County secured \$1.6 billion in CDBG-DR for long-term recovery and resilience.

ELIGIBLE USES

CDBG-DR can support **housing, infrastructure, public services, mitigation, and economic recovery** tied to disaster impacts.

PROGRAM RULE

Guidance says these dollars address **unmet needs** and supplement recovery rather than replace available federal capacity.

BUDGET LENS

Not every local expense can shift to recovery funds; each budget request should be tested against what recovery funds may cover.

Sources: Maui County FY 2026 budget release and CDBG-DR overview (research notes).

Do Not Charge Locals Twice

LOCAL BURDEN

Households are already carrying severe affordability pressure.

When local government expands spending without clearly separating **essential unfunded needs** from already eligible recovery uses, taxpayers risk absorbing costs twice.

If federal dollars fit the purpose, reserve local dollars for true gaps.

FEDERAL RECOVERY CAPACITY

Official recovery guidance says CDBG-DR fills unmet needs and supports key recovery uses.

Official County materials state CDBG-DR funds support **housing, infrastructure, public services, and mitigation**, and that overlap is the key policy test before using local funds.

The testimony's core question is whether Maui residents are being asked to finance needs that may already have an eligible federal recovery funding path.

Policy implication: the responsible path is disciplined funding alignment—use available recovery dollars first where eligible, and preserve County funds for needs that cannot be covered elsewhere.

Fix the Basics Before Costs Become Crises

When core infrastructure is deferred, residents experience disruption, danger, and loss of mobility — not accounting entries.

48 hrs

Families in **Kelaweā Mauka III** could not leave home due to storm-related sinkholes.

DEFERRED MAINTENANCE

Roads, drainage, and flood-control problems left unaddressed for decades turn routine upkeep into large liabilities.

EMERGENCY DISRUPTION

When access fails, costs go beyond dollars — **safety, mobility, and daily life** are interrupted.

POLICY TAKEAWAY

Preventive maintenance is far more cost-effective than emergency repair; basic infrastructure is a public obligation.

Source: West Maui Taxpayers' Association testimony.

ACCOUNTABILITY QUESTIONS

Demand Clear Answers on Housing and Mitigation

The testimony asks for clearer proof of who benefits, how funding streams align, and whether local dollars go only where truly needed.

HOUSING ALLOCATION

\$79.5M

Affordable Housing Fund amount cited in the testimony.

~600

Approximate number of new housing units referenced.

How many of those units will directly benefit Lahaina residents?

That is the key accountability question: not whether housing matters, but whether the County is transparent about **who benefits first** and how that aligns with Lahaina recovery needs.

Bottom line: before expanding local spending, decision-makers should show who benefits from housing investments, how Lahaina is prioritized, and why mitigation requires County dollars when significant recovery funding may already exist.

MITIGATION FUNDING

\$214M

Mitigation funding level the testimony says is set aside through CDBG-DR.

If major mitigation dollars are already available, why should overlapping work default to local budget growth?

The testimony asks whether wildfire risk reduction and related work should be evaluated against recovery dollars already available for mitigation purposes.

West Maui's Priority Needs Are Specific and Practical

The testimony does not ask for vague investment. It identifies visible, everyday improvements that directly shape how residents move, gather, and stay safe.

MOBILITY SAFETY

Traffic improvements on Keawe Street

The request calls for targeted safety measures to reduce speeding and improve conditions for **motorists and pedestrians** using this important corridor.

YOUTH & RECREATION

Kelaweā Mauka Park upgrades

Neighborhood children would benefit from **modern playground equipment** and dedicated basketball courts that support recreation, physical activity, and community connection.

Why this matters: these asks are concrete, limited, and resident-centered. They focus on safety, mobility, recreation, and basic quality of life—not abstract expansion for its own sake.

PEDESTRIAN ACCESS

Crosswalks and flashing warning lights

The testimony highlights safer crossings between Lahaina Gateway, nearby housing, and shops, including enhanced warning systems at the Keawe Street crossing near

Honoapiʻilani Highway.

TRANSIT SUPPORT

Additional or expanded bus shelters

Improved shelter capacity would strengthen the day-to-day usability of public transit and make waiting for service safer and more practical for local riders.

FUNDING MATCH

Public-Service Funds Should Cover Eligible Community Improvements

The testimony argues that certain neighborhood improvements should not automatically flow into the County budget if an appropriate recovery funding pathway may already exist.

\$25M

Public-services funding level cited in the testimony as part of the CDBG-DR framework.

NEED

West Maui priorities such as pedestrian safety, local recreation improvements, and transit-support amenities are framed as direct community needs with visible resident impact.

FUNDING LOGIC

If those improvements are **eligible under public-services recovery funding**, they should be evaluated there first rather than being automatically added to County spending growth.

DECISION STANDARD

The correct test is disciplined alignment: use the recovery source where lawful and suitable, and preserve local dollars for needs that truly require County funding.

Policy takeaway: better budgeting is not only about how much government spends. It is a funding source for the right public purpose.

Source: West Maui Taxpayers' Association testimony in provided PDF. This slide presents the testimony's funding argument as a policy-screening pr

FISCAL DISCIPLINE

Cut Waste, Not Safety

WASTE AND DUPLICATION

Savings should come from overlap, lower-priority spending, and misaligned funding choices.

The testimony asks decision-makers to take a close look at opportunities to **reduce County expenditure**, especially where recovery dollars may already support eligible needs.

That means disciplined scrutiny of duplicative spending, not broad reductions that ignore whether a service is essential to daily life.

Bottom line: prudent budgeting is not indiscriminate cutting. It is careful reprioritization—remove waste, align funding sources, and protect the services and infrastructure that residents rely on most.

The testimony supports careful savings—but warns that residents' health, safety, and welfare must never be compromised in the pursuit of lower spending.

PROTECTED ESSENTIALS

Health, safety, welfare, and basic infrastructure must remain non-negotiable.

The testimony is explicit: community well-being is not a discretionary category. Roads, drainage, flood control, and core public protections are **fundamental obligations**.

Responsible budgeting protects essential services first and treats public safety as the floor beneath every savings decision.

CUT WASTE
NOT SAFETY

The Ask: Fund Essentials, Scrutinize Overlap, Protect Residents

This is the governing standard implied by the testimony: use discipline, not drift, to decide what belongs in the County budget and what should be funded elsewhere.

Maui decision-makers should **slow down automatic budget growth**, align each project with the right funding source, and reserve local taxpayer dollars for needs that are truly essential and not otherwise coverable.

AFFORDABILITY TEST

Reconsider budget growth through the lens of household strain

Before approving added local spending, ask whether residents already under severe cost pressure can reasonably absorb its consequences.

FUNDING ALIGNMENT

Use federal recovery dollars first where they are eligible

If recovery funds can lawfully support housing, infrastructure, public services, or mitigation needs, **do not default** to County budget growth.

ESSENTIAL CORE

Preserve County dollars for true local essentials

Protect infrastructure, public safety, and other critical services that directly affect health, safety, welfare, and daily life.

Bottom line: show the public who benefits, what gets funded, why local dollars are necessary, and how each decision protects residents rather than simply enlarging the budget.

CLOSING REFLECTION

Mahalo

For West Maui families, **fiscal responsibility** and **community well-being** must move together.

Protect residents from unnecessary burden, fund true essentials, and align every public dollar with the needs that matter most.

A stronger Maui requires disciplined budgets, safer infrastructure, and transparent recovery choices.