

BFED Committee

From: Kai Nishiki <kai.nishiki@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, April 21, 2026 7:57 AM
To: BFED Committee
Cc: Nohe M. Uu-Hodgins; Tamara A. Paltin; Keani N. Rawlins; Alice L. Lee; Yukilei Sugimura; Thomas M. Cook; Shane M. Sinenci; Gabe Johnson; K. Kauanoë Batangan
Subject: Concerns Regarding Proposed Use of Managed Retreat Fund - Paia Mantokuji \$2.5 Million Request
Attachments: Paia Mantokuji Meeting Notes 3112026.pdf; HB2490-MNRH testimony.pdf; MNRH Paia Mantokuji SB3169.pdf; ECDUP21-10ExtensionRequestReply.pdf; OHA Opposition Letter.pdf

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Subject: Concerns Regarding Proposed Use of Managed Retreat Fund - Paia Mantokuji \$2.5 Million Request

Aloha Chair and Members of the Budget, Finance, and Economic Development Committee,
My name is Kai Nishiki, Executive Director of Maui Nui Resiliency Hui. Our organization works across Maui to advance shoreline protection, public access, and community-based climate resilience.

First, I want to acknowledge the deeply painful situation unfolding at the bay fronting Mantokuji Mission in Pā'ia. This moment calls for compassion, respect, and thoughtful action. At the same time, it is important to recognize that there is a better path forward already being demonstrated right here in Pā'ia. The Pā'ia Youth & Cultural Center is pursuing a managed relocation project, moving its facility out of harm's way while restoring the shoreline through the environmental review process. Similarly, the Kapuka'ulua dune restoration project on Maui's north shore is working to rebuild natural dune systems, that support the landward migration of beaches while removing failing structures like the Baldwin Beach pavilion. These efforts show that we can honor cultural resources and community needs while working with natural coastal processes, not against them.

I am writing to express **serious concerns** regarding the reported request by Paia Mantokuji Mission for **\$2.5 million from the County of Maui Managed Retreat Revolving Fund** for a shoreline "restoration and rehabilitation" project that has not been clearly defined or publicly disclosed.

At this time, there appears to be **insufficient transparency and detail** regarding the proposed project scope, design, impacts, or alignment with the stated purpose of the fund. Before any consideration of funding, it is critical that the applicant provide a **clear, detailed proposal** subject to public review and agency input.

Equally concerning is the broader context in which this request is being made. As you may be aware, representatives associated with this site have been actively pursuing legislation at the State level (SB 3169/HB2490) that seeks to **exempt the project from core environmental**

review and coastal regulatory frameworks, including Chapter 343, Chapter 205A, and Chapter 183C, as well as county shoreline and permitting requirements.

This raises a fundamental concern:

The County's Managed Retreat Fund should not be used to support projects that are simultaneously seeking to bypass the very safeguards that ensure responsible shoreline management.

Further, the stated intent of the Managed Retreat Revolving Fund, as codified in Maui County Code Chapter 3.97, is clear. The fund is designed to:

- Facilitate **removal or relocation of structures** threatened by shoreline erosion
- Support **shoreline safety improvements and hazard mitigation**
- Enable **permitting and environmental review processes**
- Prioritize projects that reduce risk to public health, safety, and the environment

Nowhere does the fund contemplate financing efforts to **maintain the status quo through shoreline hardening or engineered stabilization in high-risk areas.**

It has also come to my attention that **relocation of the structures has been previously evaluated**, with cost estimates reportedly in the range of \$2 million, and that such information was provided to the County as part of permitting conditions related to the temporary sandbag revetment currently in place. If accurate, this further underscores that a **managed relocation pathway is not only viable, but consistent with the purpose of the fund.**

In addition, it is my understanding that the applicant may currently be facing **potential enforcement actions by the County of Maui related to unpermitted work within the shoreline and SMA.** If so, this should give the Council pause. Public funds should not be committed to a project while there are unresolved compliance and permitting concerns, particularly in such a sensitive coastal zone.

If Paia Mantokuji Mission wishes to pursue funding through this program, it should be to **advance relocation and long-term resilience**, not to continue a cycle of temporary shoreline interventions that are unlikely to succeed in the face of ongoing erosion and sea level rise.

Given the complexity and sensitivity of this site culturally, environmentally, and technically, I respectfully request that the Committee:

- Direct the County **Coastal Zone Management Division and Zoning & Enforcement Division** to provide a full history and current status of the property
- Request technical input from Tara Owens, Coastal Processes & Hazards Specialist, **University of Hawai'i Sea Grant Program**
- Consult with Michael Cain, Administrator, **Department of Land and Natural Resources Office of Conservation and Coastal Lands (OCCL)** regarding regulatory considerations and prior actions

- Require a **fully developed project proposal**, including alternatives analysis (particularly relocation), before any funding is considered

This fund represents an important and limited public resource intended to help Maui proactively address shoreline hazards. It is essential that its use remains aligned with its core purpose: **moving development out of harm's way, not attempting to hold the shoreline in place.**

Please see the attached documents. Mahalo for your time and careful consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,
Kai Nishiki
Executive Director
Maui Nui Resiliency Hui

Link to SB

3169: https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/session/measure_indiv.aspx?billtype=SB&billnumber=3169&year=2026