

EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS
KE KE'ENA O KE KIA'ĀINA

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA

House Committees on Water & Land and Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs

Monday, February 12, 2024

2:00 p.m.

State Capitol, Conference Room 325 and Videoconference

With Comments

H.B. No. 2696, Relating to Lahaina Wildfire Recovery

Chairs Ichiyama and Tarnas, Vice Chairs Poepoe and Takayama, and members of the House Committees on Water & Land and Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs:

The Office of the Governor offers the following comments on H.B. No. 2696, Relating to Lahaina Wildfire Recovery.

The Maui wildfire resulted in loss of life, homes, property, infrastructure, businesses, and natural and cultural resources. This tragic incident compels the State of Hawai'i to plan effectively for recovery and expand our resiliency capacity and capability. Innovative solutions are essential to supporting these efforts.

This bill would establish the Lahaina Recovery Oversight Commission within the Department of Accounting and General Services to oversee and guide the recovery of Lahaina from the 2023 wildfires and appropriate funds.

The State of Hawai'i State Disaster Recovery Coordinator has the role of coordinating and planning for recovery and resiliency efforts for the Maui Wildfire impacts in support of the County of Maui. This contrasts with emergency response which is led by HI-EMA under Emergency Support Functions.

Last fall the Governor identified seven Recovery Support Functions (RSFs) and their corresponding State Leads. The RSFs include: Natural Resources & Cultural Resources RSF coordinated by Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources; Community Planning and Capacity Building RSF coordinated by Office of Planning and Sustainable Development; Housing RSF coordinated by Hawai'i Housing Finance and Development Corporation; Infrastructure RSF coordinated by Hawai'i Department of Transportation; Economic RSF coordinated Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism; Public Health & Healthcare Services RSF coordinated by Hawai'i State Department of Health; and Social

Testimony of Office of the Governor
H.B. No. 2696
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Services RSF coordinated by Hawai'i Department of Human Services. These RSFs and their state leads have been working closely with County of Maui, federal partners, and private organizations.

This approach—a State Coordinator coupled with RSFs—is consistent with the National Disaster Recovery Framework, a FEMA structure and process developed from the collective experience of disaster recovery managers nationwide. While the Office of the Governor is open to this concept identified in this potential legislation, we would ask the Chair to include the roles of the State Disaster Recovery Coordinator and RSFs in any new structure established to support the Maui Fires Recovery and Resiliency Efforts.

The potential legislation could be considered as long as there is no negative fiscal impact on the executive budget package.

If you have any questions on the role of State Disaster Recovery Coordinator or the State RSFs, we ask that you contact Luke Meyers, State Disaster Recovery Coordinator for further information and a dialog on this proposal during the legislative session.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.

RICHARD T. BISSEN, JR.
Mayor

JOSIAH K. NISHITA
Managing Director



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
COUNTY OF MAUI
200 SOUTH HIGH STREET
WAILUKU, MAUI, HAWAII 96793
www.mauicounty.gov

February 11, 2024

TO: Rep. Linda Ichiyama, Chair
Rep. Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair
Committee on Water and Land

Rep. David A. Tarnas, Chair
Rep. Gregg Takayama, Vice Chair
Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs

FROM: Richard T. Bissen, Jr., Mayor
Josiah K. Nishita, Managing Director

DATE: February 11, 2024

SUBJECT: **COMMENTS FOR HB2696, RELATING TO LAHAINA WILDFIRE RECOVERY.**

We respectfully offer our comments on House Bill 2696 for your consideration.

1. Mayor Bissen has established the Office of Recovery. The organizational chart, slides and supporting documents can be found here: <https://www.mauirecovers.org/recoveryphases>. This framework establishes that our efforts are community led, government supported and is in alignment with FEMA's National Disaster Recovery Framework. The state has also established a similar framework led by the State Disaster Recovery Coordinator. We coordinate with them weekly.
2. Maui County Council has funded the Office of Recovery and we are openly recruiting for six permanent civil service positions.
3. The County has conducted a joint (federal/state/county) initial recovery needs assessment and we are currently developing strategies to address the needs. This is an iterative process. An initial community sentiment analysis was conducted to support and inform the initial assessment.
4. The federal government is working to support the County's long-term recovery plan by providing technical support and consultant services at no cost to either the County or State. This

effort will formally launch Spring 2024 and will include recovery goals and objectives driven by the community engagement process and best practices. This plan will be tracked and made available to the public to provide transparency and accountability.

5. The Community Planning Recovery Support Function within the Office of Recovery has begun community engagement via community outreach to support survivors and their recovery needs, community meetings, permanent disposition site location, right of entry workshops, etc. Staff welcome public participation and feedback at the Lahaina Disaster Recovery Center. The County has also selected a consultant to support a robust community engagement effort that is set to begin Spring 2024.

The County of Maui respectfully requests that this committee consider the above with regards to HB2696 before moving it forward.



Testimony of **Lahaina Strong**
Before the House Committees on
Water & Land and Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs

In Consideration of House Bill No. 2696
RELATING TO THE LAHAINA WILDFIRE RECOVERY

To Chair Ichiyama, Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, Vice Chair Takayama and the honorable members of the committees,

We are writing on behalf of Lahaina Strong, an organization that was initially formed in 2018 following the Hurricane Lane fire in Lahaina and re-energized last year after the devastating Lahaina fires on August 8. Lahaina Strong has been at the forefront of relief and advocacy efforts, including initiating the "Fishing for Housing" camp, which has been in operation for over thirteen weeks along Kaanapali Beach, highlighting the need for dignified housing for Lahaina fire victims. Our organization is the largest grassroots, Lahaina-based community organization, with over 20,000 supporters, engaged in emphasizing the importance of local voices and community-driven solutions.

Lahaina Strong offers comments on HB2696, which establishes the Lahaina Recovery Oversight Commission within the Department of Accounting and General Services to oversee and guide the recovery of Lahaina from the 2023 wildfires.

During this legislative session, several bills have emerged with the aim of establishing a new entity to oversee the recovery and rebuilding efforts in areas devastated by the 2023 wildfire, raising concerns about potential duplication of efforts already undertaken by county or state authorities. While acknowledging the necessity of coordinated efforts, it's essential to avoid redundancy and ensure synergy between existing initiatives. Among these bills, HB2696 stands out for its approach in striking a balance between streamlining efforts and avoiding duplication. By creating the Lahaina Recovery Oversight Commission, HB2696 aims to unite state and county endeavors, thus leveraging existing resources and expertise while fostering collaboration with local

stakeholders. This bill's emphasis on comprehensive vision, public engagement, and integration of diverse perspectives positions it as a pivotal tool for effective recovery management without duplicating existing efforts, making it a promising solution to navigate the complex landscape of rebuilding post-disaster.

HB2696 distinguishes itself from the Cultural Corridor and Lele Community District bills in several key aspects, aligning more closely with our preferences for effective oversight and recovery management. Firstly, HB2696 mandates that West Maui members of the commission must have been residing in Lahaina at the time of the 2023 wildfire event, ensuring representation with firsthand experience of the disaster's impact.

As written, HB2696 is a thirteen member committee, of which ten are Maui County residents or representatives. Six out of thirteen, or less than half are specifically Lahaina residents at the time of the wildfires. We believe this number should be raised to seven by ensuring that one of the two members of the Maui County Council is the Councilmember who holds the West Maui residency seat. It is also imperative to ensure diverse representation on the Lahaina Oversight Commission, to foster inclusivity and equitable decision-making that reflects the rich cultural tapestry of Lahaina's residents.

Additionally, HB2696 emphasizes transparency by requiring that meetings be held publicly, fostering community engagement and accountability. Finally, the bill's sunset clause, causing the commission to cease existence in 2030, ensures a finite duration for oversight, preventing prolonged bureaucracy and encouraging timely action. These provisions collectively make HB2696 a more favorable option for overseeing Lahaina's recovery efforts compared to the Cultural Authority and Lele Community District bills.

We have been informed by advocates of the alternative proposals aimed at establishing an overseeing body for Lahaina's recovery and redevelopment that such an entity is essential to ensure the proper utilization of earmarked funding amounting to hundreds of millions of dollars, specifically designated for Lahaina's recovery, while also incorporating input from the Lahaina community.

Should the creation of an overseeing entity prove necessary, it could be beneficial to consider integrating a special fund provision into this bill as an amendment. Such a fund could play a pivotal role in efficiently mobilizing resources, thereby guaranteeing sustainable and adequately funded reconstruction efforts. By earmarking both State and private sector funds for Lahaina's recovery, we would demonstrate a steadfast commitment to addressing the needs of our affected community, facilitating targeted investments in crucial areas such as housing, infrastructure, environmental restoration,

and economic revitalization. Furthermore, the establishment of a dedicated special fund would afford flexibility in resource allocation, enabling prompt responses to evolving challenges and opportunities throughout the rebuilding process. In essence, the creation of a special fund would symbolize solidarity and unwavering support for Lahaina's residents as we embark on the journey toward recovery and renewal.

In summary, we believe that HB2696 could present a balance between state and local interests, empowering Lahaina residents while leveraging state support for a coordinated, inclusive, and effective recovery effort.

Mahalo for your attention and commitment to the well-being of our community.

Sincerely,

Jordan Ruidas, Pa'ele Kiakona & Courtney Lazo

Lahaina Strong



MAUI

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

VOICE OF BUSINESS

HEARING BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WATER & LAND and
JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS
HAWAII STATE CAPITOL, HOUSE CONFERENCE ROOM 325
Monday, February 12, 2024 AT 2:30 P.M.

To The Honorable Linda Ichiyama, Chair
The Honorable Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee on Water & Land
To The Honorable David A. Tarnas, Chair
The Honorable Gregg Takayama, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs

COMMENTS ON HB2696 RELATING TO DISASTER RELIEF

The Maui Chamber of Commerce would like to offer **COMMENTS on HB2696**.

The Maui Chamber of Commerce supports the intent of this bill. We note there seems to be a great deal of overlap between this bill and the already established Maui Economic Recovery Commission (MERC), which has nearly 100 participants. The MERC may likely meet the guidelines of what is detailed in this bill. The MERC will have a website and out-facing presence which may include goals, reports, and metrics. If there are accountability activities missing or additional individuals that you feel should participate, since the MERC has already been established and work is underway, our recommendation would be to consider broadening the MERC to add or strengthen accountability measures and additional expertise as needed.

We wholeheartedly agree that the rebuilding of Lahaina is critical to Maui and our state. It is imperative we be focused, transparent, accountable, and timely, with accurate reporting. This will allow for quick action to make adjustments if we are behind or off the mark and move forward in a positive direction.

We appreciate the forward thinking of this initiative. We hope that the state would consider merging the duties and responsibilities noted in this bill with already existing and operating Maui Economic Recovery Commission. Therefore, enhancing an effort that is already making progress.

The Chamber looks forward to continued discussions on this and other related bills to find the best possible solutions.

Mahalo for the opportunity to offer **COMMENTS ON HB2696**.

Sincerely,

Pamela Tumpap
President



MAUI

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

VOICE OF BUSINESS

To advance and promote a healthy economic environment for business, advocating for a responsive government and quality education, while preserving Maui's unique community characteristics.

HB-2696

Submitted on: 2/11/2024 8:00:26 PM

Testimony for WAL on 2/12/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
De Andre Makakoa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In Consideration of House Bill No. 2696 RELATING TO THE LAHAINA WILDFIRE RECOVERY

Aloha Chair Ichiyama, Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, Vice Chair Takayama, and esteemed members of the committees,

I am De Andre Makakoa, a resident of Lahaina, writing as a husband, father, and community organizer. My family and I were victims of the Lahaina wildfire, losing everything we held dear. Yet, we have been committed to rebuilding our beloved Lahaina from the ashes since day one.

I stand before you today not just as a representative of my family, but as a voice for a community that has been pushed to the brink, yet remains resilient. Together, we are Lahaina Strong.

House Bill No. 2696 establishes the Lahaina Recovery Oversight Commission within the Department of Accounting and General Services to shepherd Lahaina's recovery from the 2023 wildfires. This bill is more than a piece of legislation; it embodies our community's hope for a better, stronger Lahaina.

While several bills this legislative session propose new entities to oversee recovery and rebuilding efforts, HB2696 stands distinct. It recognizes the imperative of avoiding redundancy and ensuring synergy among existing initiatives. It aims to streamline efforts rather than duplicate them.

The proposed Lahaina Recovery Oversight Commission promises to unify state and county endeavors, leveraging existing resources and expertise while promoting collaboration with local stakeholders. It offers a comprehensive vision, emphasizes public engagement, and integrates diverse perspectives.

This bill doesn't merely aim to restore what was lost. It seeks to create a Lahaina that is stronger, more resilient, and more in line with the needs and aspirations of its people. It is a step towards making sure that the decisions about Lahaina's future are made by those who call Lahaina home.

We are not asking for handouts. We demand the right to steer our own ship, to determine our own destiny. We have a vision for Lahaina that respects our land, our culture, and our people. And we are ready to roll up our sleeves and work towards that vision.

It's time for a community-led recovery. It's time for Lahaina to rise from the ashes, stronger and more vibrant than ever before. We urge you to pass House Bill No. 2696 and empower us to shape our future.

Mahalo nunui a ke aloha nō,

De Andre Makakoa

HB-2696

Submitted on: 2/12/2024 8:22:59 AM

Testimony for WAL on 2/12/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
cheryl burghardt	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I SUPPORT HB 2696 which establishes the Lahaina Recovery Oversight Commission within the Department of Accounting and General Services to oversee and guide the recovery of Lahaina from the 2023 wildfires. Requires the Office of Enterprise Technology Services to assist in establishing a website for the Commission. Requires annual reports. Appropriates moneys. Declares that the appropriation exceeds the state general fund expenditure ceiling for 2024-2025.

I SUPPORT this bill because it encourages collaboration between govt. agencies, it will be composed of MAUI committee members and will encourage public involvement. All of us need to support the Maui folks and let them do what they know is best for their place.

Again, I SUPPORT this bill.

Council Chair
Alice L. Lee



Director of Council Services
Traci N. T. Fujita, Esq.

Vice-Chair
Yuki Lei K. Sugimura

Deputy Director of Council Services
David M. Raatz, Jr., Esq.

Presiding Officer Pro Tempore
Tasha Kama

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Shane M. Sinenci
Nohelani U'u-Hodgins

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February 12, 2024

TO: Honorable Chair Linda Ichiyama, Vice-Chair Mahina Poepoe, and members of the Committee on Water and Land

Honorable Chair David A. Tarnas, Vice-Chair Gregg Takayama, and members of the Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs

FROM: Tamara Paltin
Maui County Councilmember

SUBJECT: **PROVIDING COMMENTS ON HB 2696, RELATING TO LAHAINA WILDFIRE RECOVERY**

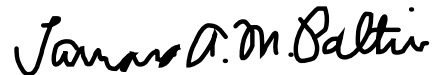
Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important measure. The purpose of this measure is to establish a commission to provide a comprehensive and integrated vision of the 2023 Lahaina wildfire recovery. This is one of several bills that seek to establish an entity to oversee the recovery and rebuilding of Lahaina. However, the Lahaina Recovery Oversight Commission established through this bill stands above the Cultural Corridor Authority and Lele Community District entities of HB 2693 and SB 3381 respectively.

My comments on the measure are as follows:

1. The emphasis the commission places on transparency, public engagement, and a comprehensive representation of West Maui interests facilitates collaboration, more thoughtfully aligns with a community-driven recovery, and avoids duplication of efforts.
2. The inclusion of County offices leverages the work that has already begun.
3. Requiring West Maui members of the commission to have been residents in Lahaina at the time of the 2023 wildfire ensures representation with firsthand experience of the disaster's impact. However, West Maui community members should hold seven, rather than six, of the thirteen commission member seats. The Lahaina community should make up more than half of the commission.
4. Requiring publicly held meetings is a critical provision.

5. The bill's sunset clause, 2030, ensures a finite duration for oversight, preventing prolonged bureaucracy and encouraging timely action. These provisions collectively make HB2696 a more favorable option for overseeing Lahaina's recovery efforts compared to the bills seeking to establish a Cultural Corridor Authority or Lele Community District.
6. The committee may consider amending the bill to include a special fund provision. Such a fund could play a pivotal role in efficiently mobilizing resources for reconstruction efforts. Earmarking State and private sector funds for Lahaina's recovery would facilitate targeted investments in crucial areas such as housing, infrastructure, environmental restoration, and economic revitalization.

Respectfully Submitted,



TAMARA PALTIN
Councilmember