
HOUSE RESOLUTION

URGING THE COUNTY OF MAUI TO ADOPT A FINANCIALLY PRUDENT BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025-2026 THAT MAINTAINS CURRENT OPERATIONAL LEVELS EXCEPT FOR CERTAIN MANDATORY OR CRITICAL INCREASES.

1 WHEREAS, the August 2023 wildfires on the island of Maui
2 destroyed the core of historic Front Street in Lahaina, Maui,
3 and many surrounding neighborhoods, killing over a hundred
4 people, destroying thousands of residential and commercial
5 structures, and displacing thousands of residents; and
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7 WHEREAS, the August 2023 wildfires also destroyed dozens of
8 structures and displaced dozens of families in Upcountry Maui;
9 and
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11 WHEREAS, the cost to respond to and recover from this
12 tragedy at the federal, state, and county levels is estimated to
13 be in the billions of dollars over multiple years; and
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15 WHEREAS, in addition to response and recovery costs, the
16 State and County of Maui also stand to lose significant revenue
17 from general excise taxes, transient accommodations taxes, and
18 real property taxes because of a decrease in visitors to the
19 island of Maui due to occupancy of hotel rooms by displaced
20 families, loss of property use and value, and waivers to
21 incentivize long-term rentals over short-term rentals; and
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23 WHEREAS, the fiscal year 2025-2026 budget currently being
24 deliberated on by this body is likely to include hundreds of
25 millions of dollars for the County of Maui for various aspects
26 of recovery; and
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28 WHEREAS, fiscal restraint will be needed in other areas of
29 state operations to offset recovery funds for the County of
30 Maui; and
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1 WHEREAS, Maui County Mayor Richard T. Bissen, Jr.,
2 presented his proposed budget for fiscal year 2025-2026 to the
3 Maui County Council on March 25, 2024; and
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5 WHEREAS, according to the Mayor's press release, the
6 proposed budget reflects an increase of \$429,200,000 over the
7 prior fiscal year, a 33.9 percent increase, while at the same
8 time expecting \$150,000,000 from the State; and
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10 WHEREAS, the proposed budget also includes funding needed
11 to support new departments and agencies, specifically a new
12 Department of 'Oiwi Resources, a new water authority to be known
13 as the East Maui Regional Community Board, and a new Department
14 of Housing arising out of the splitting of the existing
15 Department of Housing and Human Concerns, which were mandated by
16 amendments made to the Maui County Charter in 2022; and
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18 WHEREAS, the proposed budget also includes funding needed
19 to implement recommendations from wildfire after-action reports;
20 and
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22 WHEREAS, the County of Maui additionally faces unknown
23 costs to defend itself in numerous lawsuits relating to the
24 wildfires; and
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26 WHEREAS, other than these necessary spending increases and
27 those needed to continue recovery efforts, the fiscal year 2025-
28 2026 budget for the County of Maui should be conservative and
29 not increase personnel and operating expenses that will continue
30 to be supported in future years; and
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32 WHEREAS, the County of Maui has experienced staffing
33 shortages for years and has struggled to improve high vacancy
34 rates, suggesting that it may be premature to increase the
35 County's budget for additional positions when current vacancies
36 cannot be filled; and
37

38 WHEREAS, the Maui County Council begins its deliberations
39 on the fiscal year 2025-2026 budget on April 1, 2024, and has
40 scheduled a second and final reading for the budget ordinances
41 for June 5, 2024; now, therefore,
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1 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the
2 Thirty-second Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular
3 Session of 2024, that the County of Maui is urged to adopt a
4 financially prudent budget for fiscal year 2025-2026; and
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6 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Maui County Council is
7 urged to adopt, and Mayor Bissen is urged to sign, a fiscal year
8 2025-2026 budget that maintains current operational levels, such
9 as staffing, except for increases mandated by the Maui County
10 Charter or those critical to wildfire response; and
11

12 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
13 Resolution be transmitted to the Governor, Mayor of the County
14 of Maui, and members of the Maui County Council.

