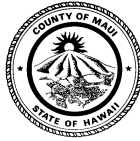


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April 1, 2024

TO: The Honorable Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair, and
Members of the Committee on Finance

FROM: Alice L. Lee
Council Chair 

SUBJECT: **HEARING OF APRIL 2, 2024; TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB582, SD2,
RELATING TO STATE BUDGET**

I **support** this measure to make an emergency appropriation to cover the State's immediate expenses incurred in the Hawaii wildfires disaster response efforts and transfer excess balances from non-General Fund sources to offset the costs to the General Fund.

This testimony is in my capacity as an individual member of the Maui County Council.

I support this measure for the following reasons:

1. The August 2023 Maui wildfires were the deadliest in the United States in more than 100 years, and they took a catastrophic toll on the island's residents. The recovery will take many years, and the total recovery costs could be more than \$5 billion.
2. Disaster recovery is a vital State function. The Lahaina Wildfire Interim Working Groups Final Report called for increased State funding of:
 - Air and water quality monitoring.
 - Research efforts to better understand the environmental concerns linked to urban fires.
 - Retrofitting of structures to be used as emergency shelters.
 - Natural-resource management
 - New positions with departments that provide critical services in disaster response.
 - Food banks.
 - Affordable housing.

- Landowner wildfire education and technical support, and multipartner wildfire risk reduction planning.
3. Transient accommodations of all types are major revenue sources for the County. With tourism lagging and many vacation rentals either lost to the fires or converted to long-term use, the County's tax revenue is in substantial decline.

Thank you for your consideration.