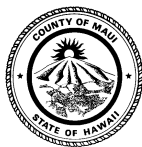


Council Chair
Mike White

Vice-Chair
Robert Carroll

Presiding Officer Pro Tempore
Stacy Crivello

Councilmembers
Alika Atay
Elle Cochran
Don S. Guzman
Riki Hokama
Kelly T. King
Yuki Lei K. Sugimura



Director of Council Services
Sandy K. Baz

COUNTY COUNCIL
COUNTY OF MAUI
200 S. HIGH STREET
WAILUKU, MAUI, HAWAII 96793
www.MauiCounty.us

March 15, 2017

TO: The Honorable Scott Y. Nishimoto, Chair
House Committee on Judiciary

FROM: Mike White
Council Chair

Handwritten signature of Mike White in black ink.

SUBJECT: **HEARING OF MARCH 16, 2017; TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 1266 SD 2, RELATING TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this important measure. The purpose of this bill is to initiate negotiations by the state to keep the units of the Front Street Apartments on Maui affordable, or to acquire the Front Street Apartments property.

The Maui County Council has not had the opportunity to take a formal position on this measure. Therefore, I am providing this testimony in my capacity as an individual member of the Maui County Council.

I **support** this measure for the following reasons:

1. This bill is a singular opportunity for the legislature to directly impact the lives of low-income residents in West Maui by exercising its authority to keep the Front Street Apartments in Lahaina affordable long-term. Current residents of the project include seniors on fixed incomes, people with disabilities receiving support, and low-income families with children. Should the Front Street Apartments be allowed to convert to market-rate rentals, more than 250 people are at risk of losing their housing.
2. The measure provides options to extend the affordable rents through negotiation with the owners, purchase of the property and improvements, or the use of the state's power of eminent domain to acquire the property should that become necessary. Whether the legislature decides to fund the project's continued affordability through 2027 or to purchase the property outright, please consider that without state intervention, 142 units will be lost from the affordable housing inventory. The loss will have an unfortunate ripple effect on the demand on affordable housing programs and service providers to meet the needs of displaced residents.
3. The most recent Hawaii Housing Planning Study notes 12,000 housing units on Maui are needed until 2025. The Maui County Council is committed to supporting legislation, methods, and programs that will increase the availability of affordable housing. Despite this commitment, it is an uphill battle. This measure needs the legislature's support before it is too late.

For the foregoing reasons, I **support** this measure.