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February 22, 2017

TO: Honorable Will Espero, Chair
Senate Committee on Housing

Honorable Clarence Nishihara, Chair
Senate Committee on Public Safety, Intergovernmental, and Military Affairs

FROM: Mike White, Chair
Maui County Council 

SUBJECT: **HEARING OF FEBRUARY 23, 2017; TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 482, RELATING TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **support** this important measure. This bill extends the window for a county council to approve or disapprove affordable housing projects that are exempt from planning, zoning, and construction standards, from 45 to 60 days.

This measure is included the 2017 Maui County Council legislative package. Therefore, I submit this testimony on behalf of the Maui County Council.

I support this measure for the following reasons:

1. I appreciate the importance of making swift, but well-informed decisions for proposed affordable housing projects under HRS Section 201-H. However, the Maui County Council, on multiple occasions, has encountered unavoidable challenges in considering proposals within the 45-day timeframe.
2. A combination of sunshine law requirements, the need to simultaneously complete other legislative business, along with the desire to conduct site visits, and gather input from both the community and other governmental agencies makes the current timeframe a challenge. The short window does not always allow for meaningful discussion, modifications and diligent decision-making, particularly where failure to act within 45 days is deemed as an approval.
3. A 60-day window would increase the timeframe by only 15 days, but will tremendously help in making the process more manageable. This can be viewed as a compromise, as the timeframe still allows for an expedited review of qualified projects. This would allow county councils to appropriately exercise the due diligence required of an undertaking as important to the community as affordable housing.

For the foregoing reasons, I support this measure.