

Dear Co-Chairs Hashimoto, Evslin, and members of the Shelter Working Group,

My name is Ashley Galacgac and I reside in Pālolo. I serve as the Co-Coordinator of AF3IRM Hawai‘i, an all-volunteer black, indigenous, immigrant, and women-of-color organization committed to ending oppression in all its forms.

I respectfully submit testimony commenting on the November 1, 2023 Draft Report of the Shelter Working Group. I am deeply concerned that survivors of domestic violence were not considered in the analysis and not included in the fourth recommendation to the legislature “Ensuring support for the State’s most vulnerable populations”. I respectfully request:

- Survivors of domestic violence are included in the recommendations to the legislature because domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness for women and their children. Many survivors face houselessness when they flee abusive homes; and
- A set-aside for the creation of transitional housing units for survivors of domestic violence in “Recommendation 1: Leveraging State Financing Options”.

I urge you to listen to the domestic violence advocates who have been on the front lines. Maui’s only emergency domestic violence shelter, Women Helping Women, has already experienced a surge of calls to their 24/7 hotline. They typically receive around 150-250 calls per month, but since the wildfires call volume has risen by an additional 300 calls per month.

The domestic violence community statewide is bracing for more disclosures of abuse in Maui and is preparing to step in to help. Maui County also sees nearly 800 temporary restraining orders each year, and because of the wildfires, they are preparing to see more.

There is a direct link between disasters and gender-based violence. External factors that add stress and financial strain negatively impact survivors and create circumstances where their safety is further compromised. Their environments become more dangerous and isolation increases as support and local services are overwhelmed. Natural disasters do not cause domestic violence, but the physical, mental, and socioeconomic effects of disaster can escalate abusive tactics. This working group’s report has already identified those very same stressors on pages 2-3:

“Within the State, Maui has the highest median posted rental prices at \$2,500 a month. Due to these factors, Hawai‘i has the highest percentage of homeowners paying more than 30% of their income on their mortgage, 9 making these households more vulnerable to increased stress, mental health problems, and an increased risk of disease.<sup>10</sup> High housing prices are the primary contributor to high rates of homelessness nationwide,<sup>11</sup> and, as would be expected given the dire housing market, Hawai‘i’s rate of homelessness is more than double the national average.”

I am requesting a set-aside for transitional housing because emergency domestic violence shelter is only a temporary solution (capped at 120 days); ultimately, survivors need a more long-term solution with supportive services. Historically, transitional housing for domestic violence survivors has been funded through discretionary federal funds (i.e., competitive and not consistent). This commitment from the legislature would ensure an investment in the medium- and long-term safety of survivors.

Thank you for your consideration of our recommendations.

Sincerely,  
Ashley Galacgac



November 17, 2023

Dear Co-Chairs Hashimoto, Evslin, and members of the Shelter Working Group,

My name is Alani, I reside in Waikiki and I serve the Hawai'i State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (HSCADV) which addresses the social, political, and economic impacts of domestic violence on individuals, families, and communities. We are a statewide partnership of domestic violence programs and shelters.

On behalf of HSCADV and our 28 member programs statewide, I respectfully submit testimony commenting on the November 1, 2023 Draft Report of the Shelter Working Group. We are grateful to the working group and appreciate all of your work to evaluate the availability of housing in Maui for those displaced by the fires this summer, as well as the short and long-term solutions offered.

However, we are deeply concerned that survivors of domestic violence were not considered in the analysis and not included in the fourth recommendation to the legislature "Ensuring support for the State's most vulnerable populations". We respectfully request:

1. Survivors of domestic violence are included in the recommendations to the legislature because domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness for women and their children. Many survivors face homelessness when they flee abusive homes; and
2. A set-aside for the creation of transitional housing units for survivors of domestic violence in Recommendation 1: Leveraging State Financing Options.

Rationale:

Nationwide, between 22 and 57% of all homeless women report that domestic violence was the immediate cause of their homelessness.<sup>1</sup> Both the O'ahu and Bridging the Gap (for the neighbor

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<sup>1</sup> Wilder Research Center, Homelessness in Minnesota 2003 22 (2004); Center for Impact Research, Pathways to and from Homelessness: Women and Children in Chicago Shelters 3 (2004); Nat'l Center on Family Homelessness & Health Care for the Homeless Clinicians' Network, Social Supports for Homeless Mothers, 14 26 (2003); Inst. For Children & Poverty, The Hidden Migration: Why New York City Shelters Are Overflowing with Families (2004); Homes for the Homeless & Inst. For Children & Poverty, Ten Cities 1997-1998: A Snapshot of Family Homelessness Across America 3 (1998); Virginia Coalition for the Homeless, 1995 Shelter Provider Survey (1995)(out of print), cited in Nat'l Coalition for the Homeless, Domestic Violence and Homelessness: NCH Fact Sheet #8 (1999).



islands) Point in Time Count surveys<sup>2</sup> saw an increased trend in the number of people who had experienced domestic violence. In the 2023 “O‘ahu Point in Time Count,” domestic violence survivors accounted for 23% of all unsheltered surveyed adults.

According Hawai‘i Department of Health data, Maui county has the highest prevalence of domestic violence in the state at 17.8%<sup>3</sup>.

I want to express my concern about the need to acknowledge the impact of disasters and housing insecurity among victims and survivors of domestic violence and their children.

Furthermore, there is a direct link between disasters and gender-based violence. External factors that add stress and financial strain negatively impact survivors and create circumstances where their safety is further compromised. Their environments become more dangerous and isolation increases as support and local services are overwhelmed. **Natural disasters do not cause domestic violence, but the physical, mental, and socioeconomic effects of disaster can escalate abusive tactics.** This working group’s report has already identified those very same stressors on pages 2-3:

*“Within the State, Maui has the highest median posted rental prices at \$2,500 a month. Due to these factors, Hawai‘i has the highest percentage of homeowners paying more than 30% of their income on their mortgage,<sup>9</sup> making these households more vulnerable to increased stress, mental health problems, and an increased risk of disease.<sup>10</sup> High housing prices are the primary contributor to high rates of homelessness nationwide,<sup>11</sup> and, as would be expected given the dire housing market, Hawai‘i’s rate of homelessness is more than double the national average.<sup>12</sup>”*

**We know that domestic violence survivors are amongst the fire survivors and we fear that they will experience exacerbated levels of displacement due to their victimization if we don’t include them in the state’s response to the fires.**

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<sup>2</sup> The point in time count survey is an annual street and shelter count that determines the number of people experiencing homelessness.

<sup>3</sup> Vergara R, Hayes D, Higashi J, Liang S, Kaiwi H, Arakaki K. (2018). “Violence Between Intimate Partners in Hawaii Across the Life Span. Data from BFRSS, PRAMS and YRBS” Honolulu, HI: Hawaii State Department of Health, Family Health Services Division. [https://health.hawaii.gov/fhsd/files/2019/02/IPVFact-Sheet\\_2018\\_FINAL\\_01-29-19-1.pdf](https://health.hawaii.gov/fhsd/files/2019/02/IPVFact-Sheet_2018_FINAL_01-29-19-1.pdf)



HAWAI'I STATE  
**COALITION AGAINST  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

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The domestic violence community statewide is bracing for more disclosures of abuse in Maui and are preparing to step in to help. Maui County also sees nearly 800 temporary restraining orders each year, and because of the wildfires they are preparing to see more.

We're requesting a set-aside for transitional housing because emergency domestic violence shelter is only a temporary solution (capped at 120 days); ultimately, survivors need a more long-term solution with supportive services. Historically, transitional housing for domestic violence survivors has been funded through discretionary federal funds (i.e., competitive and not consistent). This commitment from the legislature would ensure an investment in the medium- and long-term safety of survivors.

Thank you for your consideration of our recommendations.

Sincerely,

Alani Bagcal, COVID-19 Response Coordinator  
[abagcal@hscadv.org](mailto:abagcal@hscadv.org)

**TESTIMONY  
TO THE HAWAII STATE HOUSE WILDFIRE WORKING GROUP  
NOVEMBER 17, 2023**

FROM: DAVID DELEON  
HAIKU, MAUI

Thank you for this opportunity to provide my thoughts on the actions that must be considered after the devastating Lahaina Wildfire. I am David DeLeon, a resident of Haiku, Maui.

I am writing to express my concern that a key element to provide safety to the residents of Lahaina seems to have been missed in your otherwise exhaustive study of the subject: alternative evacuation routes out of Lahaina.

One of the lessons of this disaster is that we must learn from it. Apparently, despite having nearly losing Lahaina in 2018, we failed to take the time do the work your group is attempting now. If that had happened, perhaps there would have been a better outcome.

A key lesson about Lahaina's geography is that you can count on the Winds of Kauaula to cause hazards for Lahaina. This has always been a known geographical fact, celebrated in ancient stories and continuing into written history. They are sort of like the Santa Ana winds of South California. What changed on Maui in recent times is the loss of the sugar cane cover crop. Green cane that has not been prepared for harvest will not become a flash fire. It burns slowly. The wild grass that replaced the cane, when dried and coupled with high winds, will burn in a flash.

That means that human habitation around that portion of West Maui requires special measures for safety. One of those measures is the establishment of effective evacuation routes.

In the recent wildfire that need became abundantly clear. The existing road system failed to meet the sudden demand. As residents tried to escape the racing fire threat, some tried to use the Lahaina's dirt cane haul roads, only to find them locked. In some desperate cases police officers broke chains or rammed gates to make these escape routes available. One has to wonder what happened to those families who tried these routes before the officers arrived.

Consideration also has to be given to the trauma that the West Maui has suffered. If you have been around someone who has just experienced a trauma, you will note that they are now on guard, protecting themselves and their families against further harm. Many sat in traffic jams as the fire raced towards them. Some had to escape to the ocean for relative safety. The resulting emotional scars will be with them for life.

Knowing that the government has pro-actively created a system of evacuation routes – in addition to the regular highway system – may help ease their anxiousness when the winds again roar.

Because Lahaina was a plantation town not long ago, it still has a network of abandoned cane haul roads that can provide the base for an evacuation road network. While much of the work of re-building Lahaina Town's infrastructure – water, sewer, electricity, etc. – may take a decade to complete – the work of establishing an evacuation route system can start immediately with the government (county or state) taking possession of the existing cane haul routes; removing the gates and chains that impeded escape in August; and declaring them as evacuation routes.

That would be a pro-active step towards safety, towards mitigating the fear that something similar can happen again. It would be a step towards showing that we have learned from this disaster.

Maui already has one such existing route. While primarily built as a recreational route, the Northshore Greenway around the makai side of Kahului Airport was also designed as alternative route in the case the Hana Highway is suddenly out of service. The route's one bridge was designed and built to be able to handle a fire truck. Luckily, we have never had to use the greenway as an emergency bypass, but it is there if needed.

I have heard of similar discussions about giving the Waianae Community access to the Lualualei Road over the Waianae Mountains through Kolekole Pass into Schofield in the case that Farrington Highway is lost. Alternatives make sense.

The work to build out the Lahaina evacuation routes – planning, appropriating and construction of a one-lane route -- can follow a pace. But at least with the opening of the existing dirt cane haul roads as escape routes, the community will have an immediate alternative.

Mahalo for your consideration.

David DeLeon

[dpdeleon@hawaiiantel.net](mailto:dpdeleon@hawaiiantel.net)

808-281-3269

SHELTER WORKING GROUP Troy N. Hashimoto, Co-Chair, Luke A. Evslin Co-Chair  
Hearing Date: November 17th, 2023

Dear Co-Chairs Hashimoto, Evslin, and members of the Shelter Working Group,

I am writing to express my concern about the issue of language access in evaluating the availability and creation of temporary and transitional shelters for displaced individuals and families. As you know, Limited English Proficient (LEP) individuals and immigrants face significant barriers in accessing information and services during emergencies.

During emergencies, LEP individuals and immigrants may struggle to understand their rights and options, access emergency services, and receive assistance due to language barriers. This can lead to confusion, fear, and a lack of trust in emergency responders and government officials. In addition, language barriers can prevent LEP individuals and immigrants from accessing emergency shelters and other resources, which can exacerbate the impact of the emergency on these vulnerable populations.

To address this issue, I strongly recommend creating a working group on language access that can identify and address language barriers in emergency situations. The working group could develop strategies for providing language access services, such as translation and interpretation services, multilingual outreach materials, and language access training for emergency responders.

I urge the Shelter Working Group to prioritize language access in evaluating the availability and creation of temporary and transitional shelters for displaced individuals and families. By addressing language barriers, we can ensure that all individuals have equal access to emergency services and resources and that LEP individuals and immigrants are not left behind during emergencies.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,  
The HAPA Team



November 17, 2023

TO: Chair Evslin and members of the Shelter Working Group  
RE: SHLWG Draft Report

My name is Sterling Higa, and I live in Ha'ikū with my wife and four children.

I serve as executive director of Housing Hawai'i's Future, a nonprofit creating opportunities for Hawai'i's next generation by ending the workforce housing shortage.

We support the recommendations provided in the draft report.

- 1. FINANCING:** Maui County's finances will be impacted by the fire. Insurance payments will be slow in coming for some families and nonexistent for others. Maui will need state financing to help in rebuilding Lāhainā and in providing housing throughout Maui County for the displaced and for families already struggling to afford housing.
- 2. REGULATION:** Hawai'i has the most burdensome housing regulations in the country.<sup>1</sup> For decades, Maui County has failed to pass zoning and permitting reforms necessary to address the affordable housing crisis that existed *before* the fires of August 8. The legislature can wait another 53 years (for zoning reform) or forever (for permitting reform), or the legislature can act on behalf of the people of Maui. **Note: Despite the protests of unelected planners at the county level, home rule is not inviolable.** The Hawai'i State Constitution Article IX Section 5 makes the state's authority in housing clear: "The State shall have the power to provide for, or assist in, housing, slum clearance and the development or rehabilitation of substandard areas. The exercise of such power is deemed to be for a public use and purpose."<sup>2</sup>
- 3. SHORT-TERM RENTALS:** Counties need the authority to phase out non-conforming STRs and the authority to regulate legal and illegal STRs. Period. We cannot ignore the developments in technology (e.g., Airbnb, VRBO) or the increased demand for STRs in the last two decades.
- 4. VULNERABLE POPULATIONS:** In the long run, we need solutions to homelessness that don't rely on emergency proclamations. The state should create legal pathways to the most affordable forms of housing (e.g., single-room occupancy).

Thank you,



Sterling Higa  
Executive Director  
Housing Hawai'i's Future  
[sterling@hawaiisfuture.org](mailto:sterling@hawaiisfuture.org)  
+1 (808) 782-7868

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<sup>1</sup> <https://uhero.hawaii.edu/measuring-the-burden-of-housing-regulation-in-hawaii/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://lrh.hawaii.gov/constitution/>

November 15, 2023

Dear Co-Chairs Hashimoto, Evslin, and members of the Shelter Working Group,

My name is Lea Messing, I am an HPU Social Work Student and I've previously worked as a domestic violence advocate.

I respectfully submit testimony commenting on the November 1, 2023 Draft Report of the Shelter Working Group. I am grateful to the working group and appreciate all of your work to evaluate the availability of housing in Maui for those displaced by the fires this summer, as well as the short and long-term solutions offered.

However, I am deeply concerned that survivors of domestic violence were not considered in the analysis and not included in the fourth recommendation to the legislature "Ensuring support for the State's most vulnerable populations". I respectfully request:

1. Survivors of domestic violence are included in the recommendations to the legislature because domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness for women and their children. Many survivors face homelessness when they flee abusive homes; and
2. A set-aside for the creation of transitional housing units for survivors of domestic violence in "Recommendation 1: Leveraging State Financing Options".

Rationale:

Nationwide, between 22 and 57% of all homeless women report that intimate partner violence was the immediate cause of their homelessness.<sup>1</sup> Both the O'ahu and Bridging the Gap (for the neighbor islands) Point in Time Count surveys<sup>2</sup> saw an increased trend in the number of people who had experienced domestic violence. In the 2023 "O'ahu Point in Time Count," domestic violence survivors accounted for 23% of all unsheltered surveyed adults.

According Hawai'i Department of Health data, Maui county has the highest prevalence of domestic violence in the state at 17.8%<sup>3</sup>.

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I want to express my concern about the need to acknowledge the impact of disasters and housing insecurity among victims and survivors of intimate partner violence and their children.

Furthermore, there is a direct link between disasters and gender-based violence. External factors that add stress and financial strain negatively impact survivors and create circumstances where their safety is further compromised. Their environments become more dangerous and isolation increases as support and local services are overwhelmed. **Natural disasters do not cause domestic violence, but the physical, mental, and socioeconomic effects of disaster can escalate abusive tactics. We know that domestic violence survivors are amongst the fire survivors and we fear that they will experience exacerbated levels of displacement due to their victimization if we don't include them in the state's response to the fires.**

Maui's only emergency domestic violence shelter, *Women Helping Women*, has already experienced a surge of calls to their 24/7 hotline. They typically receive around 150-250 calls per month, but since the wildfires call volume has risen by an additional 300 calls per month.

The domestic violence community statewide is bracing for more disclosures of abuse in Maui and are preparing to step in to help. Maui County also sees nearly 800 temporary restraining orders each year, and because of the wildfires they are preparing to see more.

I am requesting a set-aside for transitional housing because emergency domestic violence shelter is only a temporary solution (capped at 120 days); ultimately, survivors need a more long-term solution with supportive services. Historically, transitional housing for domestic violence survivors has been funded through discretionary federal funds (i.e., competitive and not consistent). This commitment from the legislature would ensure an investment in the medium- and long-term safety of survivors.

Thank you for your consideration of our recommendations.

Sincerely,

**Lea Messing, private citizen**  
**lmessing1@my.hpu.edu**

SHELTER WORKING GROUP Troy N. Hashimoto, Co-Chair, Luke A. Evslin Co-Chair  
Hearing Date: November 17th, 2023

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I urge the Shelter Working Group to prioritize language access in evaluating the availability and creation of temporary and transitional shelters for displaced individuals and families. By addressing language barriers, we can ensure that all individuals have equal access to emergency services and resources and that LEP individuals and immigrants are not left behind during emergencies.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

**Nanea Lo** (*she/they/o ia*) | Micro-influencer  
Admin & Program Coordinator | [HAPA](#)  
Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action 5013-c  
Board Member | [Hawai'i Worker's Center](#)

Granter | [Hawai'i People's Fund](#)  
Kona Representative | [O'ahu Island Burial Council](#)  
Commissioner | [O'ahu Historic Preservation Commission](#)  
(808)444-1229  
[Instagram](#) / [Twitter](#) / [LinkedIn](#)

**"Some people say that Hawai'i will be a better place when Hawaiians no longer stand in the way of progress. But even these people must know that at this point, this will no longer be Hawai'i."** - Jonathan Kay  
Kamakawiwo'ole Osorio. The Value of Hawai'i

November 15, 2023

Dear Co-Chairs Hashimoto, Evslin, and members of the Shelter Working Group,

My name is Pannelopi McKenzie, I reside in Upcountry Maui and I serve as a student IBCLC and work at Maui's Women helping Women as a Shelter Advocate. I respectfully submit testimony commenting on the November 1, 2023 Draft Report of the Shelter Working Group. I am grateful to the working group and appreciate all of your work to evaluate the availability of housing in Maui for those displaced by the fires this summer, as well as the short and long-term solutions offered.

We must not normalize and disregard the community wide impact of Domestic Violence and housing vulnerability. Intersecting systemic neglect Woman and children's safety from violence and disregard of the long term impacts as survivors that must be broadly addressed.

I am deeply concerned that survivors of domestic violence were not considered in the analysis and not included in the fourth recommendation to the legislature "Ensuring support for the State's most vulnerable populations". . I respectfully request:

1. Survivors of domestic violence are included in the recommendations to the legislature because domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness for women and their children. Many survivors face homelessness when they flee abusive homes; and

2. A set-aside for the creation of transitional housing units for survivors of domestic violence in "Recommendation 1: Leveraging State Financing Options".

Rationale:

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According Hawai'i Department of Health data, Maui county has the highest prevalence of domestic violence in the state at 17.8%.

I want to express my concern about the need to acknowledge the impact of disasters and housing insecurity among victims and survivors of domestic violence and their children.

Furthermore, there is a direct link between disasters and gender-based violence. External factors that add stress and financial strain negatively impact survivors and create circumstances where their safety is further compromised. Their environments become more dangerous and isolation increases as support and local services are overwhelmed. Natural disasters do not cause domestic violence, but the physical, mental, and socioeconomic effects of disaster can escalate abusive tactics. This working group's report has already identified those very same stressors on pages 2-3:

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Maui's only emergency domestic violence shelter, Women Helping Women, has already experienced a surge of calls to their 24/7 hotline. They typically receive around 150-250 calls per month, but since the wildfires call volume has risen by an additional 300 calls per month.

The domestic violence community statewide is bracing for more disclosures of abuse in Maui and are preparing to step in to help. Maui County also sees nearly 800 temporary restraining orders each year, and because of the wildfires they are preparing to see more.

I am requesting a set-aside for transitional housing because emergency domestic violence shelter is only a temporary solution (capped at 120 days); ultimately, survivors need a more long-term solution with supportive services. Historically, transitional housing for domestic violence survivors has been funded through discretionary federal funds (i.e., competitive and not consistent). This commitment from the legislature would ensure an investment in the medium- and long-term safety of survivors.

Thank you for your consideration of our recommendations.

Sincerely,

Pahnelopi McKenzie

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Blessed be your day and all that you do!



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Twitter.com/aarphawaii | facebook.com/aarphawaii

**The State Legislature  
Shelter Working Group  
Friday, November 17, 2023  
Conference Room 329, 2:30 p.m.**

TO: The Honorable Troy Hashimoto, Co-Chair  
The Honorable Luke Evslin, Co-Chair

FROM: Keali'i S. López, State Director

RE: AARP Comments – Shelter Working Group Draft Report

Aloha Co-Chairs Hashimoto and Evslin, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Keali'i Lopez and I am the State Director for AARP Hawai'i. AARP is a nonpartisan, social impact organization that advocates for individuals aged 50 and older. We have a membership of nearly 38 million nationwide and nearly 140,000 in Hawai'i. We advocate at the state and federal level for the issues that matter most to older adults and their families.

Thank you for sharing the draft report prepared by the Shelter Working Group which evaluates the availability and creation of temporary and transitional shelters for displaced individuals and families and provide recommendations for appropriate legislative actions. AARP appreciates this opportunity to provide the following comments on this report:

*Overall, the document is well written, clear and succinct. It includes a well document review of the current housing crisis and details the housing situation from both a pre and post fire perspective. We offer only two points concerning this document.*

- *State funding: it is critical to emphasize the importance of the state providing flexible state dollars. A tremendous amount of work can be started with those funds which can help to expedite the long term CDBG-DR (Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery) housing recovery efforts; those dollars can help to re-establish needed infrastructure, purchase land for new development, and fund the engineering and design costs for large housing projects, allowing the CDBG-DR dollars to flow directly into housing construction efforts.*
- *Recommendation: We Recommend the state make significant investment into the training of construction trades with a coordinated outreach campaign to local*



*residents; labor shortages will be a major impediment to construction progress once funding is available. Significant work can be done now to position the island for success in the future.*

Older adults are disproportionately impacted by disasters, often representing the majority of fatalities resulting from extreme weather, natural hazards, and public emergencies. Tragically, this remains true in the recent Lahaina fire. Kūpuna are also among the vulnerable population in not securing affordable housing and risk facing homelessness especially after a disaster.

We deeply appreciate the Legislature's efforts to incorporate the lessons learned from the Maui disaster and work toward finding better solutions to mitigate, prepare and respond to future emergencies.

Mahalo for this opportunity to comment on this draft report.

November 17, 2023, 2:30 p.m.

To: Co-Chairs Troy Hashimoto and Luke Evslin  
Shelter Working Group

From: Ted Kefalas, Director of Strategic Campaigns  
Grassroot Institute of Hawaii

## Comments on the draft Shelter Working Group report

Aloha Co-Chairs Hashimoto and Evslin and members,

Thank you for allowing the public to weigh in on this [draft report](#). We appreciate your diligence and attention to the issues facing Maui residents who were displaced by the August wildfires.

The Grassroot Institute of Hawaii believes removing barriers to multifamily housing would help boost Hawaii's housing supply and lower housing costs. Studies have shown that "upzoning" — increasing allowable housing densities — lowers prices when pursued in a comprehensive manner.<sup>1</sup>

Currently, county zoning codes in every county except Honolulu place stringent requirements on the construction of multifamily housing in residential zones.<sup>2</sup> Maui's zoning code does have zones where duplexes can be built "by right," but those zones comprise just a handful of parcels and subdivisions on the island.<sup>3</sup>

These strict codes have helped cause Hawaii's current housing shortage. State and county level action is needed to roll back the most burdensome of these codes and expand Hawaii's housing supply, especially on Maui where housing was scarce even before the fires.

California's SB9 could serve as a starting point for statewide reform. The 2021 law allowed up to four housing units on all parcels zoned residential and permitted homeowners to split their lots in two.

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<sup>1</sup> Jensen Ahokovi, "[Auckland, New Zealand, could be model for housing in Hawaii](#)," published in the Honolulu Star-Advertiser, Aug. 24, 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Honolulu allows duplexes to be built "by right" on all land zoned residential, while other counties have stricter requirements. See Jonathan Helton, "How to facilitate homebuilding in Hawaii," forthcoming Grassroot Institute of Hawaii policy paper, 2023.

<sup>3</sup> "[Zoning \(County of Maui\)](#)," Hawaii Statewide GIS Program, as of June 2022, accessed Nov. 15, 2023.

The law is not perfect and has run into implementation obstacles at the local government level, but nonetheless serves as a blueprint for housing reform.<sup>4</sup>

Adjusting parking minimums could also boost the stock of multifamily housing. The counties generally require two parking spaces per dwelling unit, which can add between \$5,000 and \$77,000 to the cost of the unit, according to a study conducted for the Ulupono Initiative. This range reflects a variety of factors, including land costs, whether the parking is provided as a garage or a surface lot, and overall project profit margins.<sup>5</sup>

Cities across the United States have reduced or eliminated their parking minimums, and research shows these reforms lower overall housing costs and reduce reliance on automobiles.<sup>6</sup> At either the state or county level, Hawaii would do well to follow this trend.

In an upcoming report, the Grassroot Institute discusses upzoning, by-right approvals, parking minimums and other zoning and permitting reforms that Hawaii's counties could enact to boost the supply of housing in urban areas. We will share a copy of this report with you all once it is published.

In addition, we agree with the Shelter Working Group that creating emergency standards for prefabricated housing is a necessary step toward providing short-term shelter. These standards should be designed with the goal of establishing permanent statewide rules for prefabricated housing that would expand its availability.

The Grassroot Institute is concerned about the Working Group's suggestion that counties be allowed to phase out existing short-term rentals. While the law is unsettled on whether short term rentals can be eliminated, courts have recognized the ability to rent for shorter periods as a property right, the taking of which can require compensation under the U.S. Constitution.

In 2022, a federal court enjoined portions of a Honolulu ordinance that eliminated rentals between 30 and 90 days. Though the decision relied on restrictions in state law regarding the phase-out of previously allowed residential uses, the court added that the short-term rentals were, "a vested property right protected by takings principles," and that the ordinance likely violated the Takings Clause of the U.S. Constitution.<sup>7</sup>

The Shelter Working Group's draft report also states that "the County of Maui should incentivize STR owners to convert to long-term housing through tax incentives or other necessary means."<sup>8</sup> In fact, the Maui County Council

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<sup>4</sup> David Garcia and Muhammed Alameldin, "[California's HOME Act Turns One: Data and Insights from the First Year of Senate Bill 9](#)," UC-Berkeley's Turner Center for Housing Innovation, Jan. 18, 2023. See also "[Is SB 9 Working? Here's What Early Data Reveals](#)," California YIMBY, Feb. 22, 2023.

<sup>5</sup> "[The Costs of Parking in Hawai'i](#)," Prepared by PBR & Associates for the Ulupono Initiative, August 2020, p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> C.J. Gabbe, Gregory Pierce and Gordon Clowers, "[How Developers Respond to Parking Reform](#)," Transfers Magazine, Fall 2020; and Adam Millard-Ball, Jeremy West and Nazanin Rezaei, et al., "[How the Built Environment Affects Car Ownership and Travel: Evidence from San Francisco Housing Lotteries](#)," University of California Institute for Transportation Studies, August 2020.

<sup>7</sup> [Hawaii Legal Short-Term Rental Alliance v. City and County of Honolulu et al](#), No. 1:2022cv00247 - Document 31 (D. Haw. 2022).

<sup>8</sup> "[Shelter Working Group Draft Report, November 1, 2023](#)," p. 15.

is already in the process of creating a temporary property tax incentive program for long-term and short-term rental operators to provide their units as shelter for residents displaced by the fires.

Finally, we recommend the Shelter Working Group support a “Yes, in God’s backyard” law for Hawaii, similar to one recently enacted in California. Under a bill proposed in the Hawaii Legislature in the 2023 session,<sup>9</sup> churches, hospitals, schools and other charitable and community organizations would have been allowed to build housing on their own land without excessive discretionary hearings that could stall or sink these much-needed projects.

There is already at least one church on Maui seeking to build emergency shelter on its land. Mayor Richard Bissen’s emergency orders suspended normal zoning codes for some housing projects, which should allow this central Maui project to proceed. However, in normal circumstances, these shelters would have to go through a time- and resource-intensive process to obtain permission to build.<sup>10</sup>

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Ted Kefalas  
Director of Strategic Campaigns  
Grassroot Institute of Hawaii

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<sup>9</sup> [HB814 CD1](#), accessed Nov. 14, 2023.

<sup>10</sup> Jonathan Helton, [“Maui can take lead in ‘Yes in God’s backyard’ housing,”](#) The Maui News, Nov. 10, 2023.

Dear Co-Chairs Hashimoto, Evslin, and members of the Shelter Working Group,  
My name is Vanessa Corwin, I reside in Honolulu, and I have worked with survivors of gender-based violence for eight years.

I respectfully submit testimony commenting on the November 1, 2023 Draft Report of the Shelter Working Group. I am grateful to the working group and appreciate all of your work to evaluate the availability of housing in Maui for those displaced by the fires this summer, as well as the short and long-term solutions offered.

However, I am deeply concerned that survivors of domestic violence were not considered in the analysis and not included in the fourth recommendation to the legislature “Ensuring support for the State’s most vulnerable populations”. I respectfully request:

- 1.
- 2.
3. Survivors of domestic violence are included in the recommendations to
4. the legislature because domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness for women and their children. Many survivors face homelessness when they flee abusive homes; and
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
8. A set-aside for the creation of transitional housing units for survivors
9. of domestic violence in “Recommendation 1: Leveraging State Financing Options”.
- 10.

Rationale:

Nationwide, between 22 and 57% of all homeless women report that domestic violence was the immediate cause of their homelessness. Both the O’ahu and Bridging the Gap (for the neighbor islands) Point in Time Count surveys saw an increased trend in the number of people who had experienced domestic violence. In the 2023 “O’ahu Point in Time Count,” domestic violence survivors accounted for 23% of all unsheltered surveyed adults.

According Hawai’i Department of Health data, Maui county has the highest prevalence of domestic violence in the state at 17.8%.

I want to express my concern about the need to acknowledge the impact of disasters and housing insecurity among victims and survivors of domestic violence and their children.

Furthermore, there is a direct link between disasters and gender-based violence. External factors that add stress and financial strain negatively impact survivors and create circumstances where their safety is further compromised. Their environments become more dangerous and isolation increases as support and local services are overwhelmed. Natural disasters do not cause domestic violence, but the physical, mental, and socioeconomic effects of disaster can escalate abusive tactics. This working group’s report has already identified those very same stressors on pages 2-3:

“Within the State, Maui has the highest median posted rental prices at \$2,500 a month. Due to these factors, Hawai’i has the highest percentage of homeowners paying more than 30% of their income on their mortgage, making these households more vulnerable to increased stress, mental health problems, and an increased risk of disease.<sup>10</sup> High housing prices are the primary contributor to high rates of homelessness nationwide, and, as would be expected given the dire housing market, Hawai’i’s rate of homelessness is more than double the national average.”

We know that domestic violence survivors are amongst the fire survivors and we fear that they will experience exacerbated levels of displacement due to their victimization if we don't include them in the state's response to the fires.

Maui's only emergency domestic violence shelter, Women Helping Women, has already experienced a surge of calls to their 24/7 hotline. They typically receive around 150-250 calls per month, but since the wildfires call volume has risen by an additional 300 calls per month.

The domestic violence community statewide is bracing for more disclosures of abuse in Maui and are preparing to step in to help. Maui County also sees nearly 800 temporary restraining orders each year, and because of the wildfires they are preparing to see more.

I am requesting a set-aside for transitional housing because emergency domestic violence shelter is only a temporary solution (capped at 120 days); ultimately, survivors need a more long-term solution with supportive services. Historically, transitional housing for domestic violence survivors has been funded through discretionary federal funds (i.e., competitive and not consistent). This commitment from the legislature would ensure an investment in the medium- and long-term safety of survivors.

Thank you for your consideration of these recommendations.

Sincerely,  
Vanessa Corwin



**November 16, 2023**

**Aoha Co-Chairs Hashimoto, Evslin, and members of the Shelter Working Group,**

My name is Renaé Hamilton-Cambeilh, I reside in Kapa'a and I am the Executive Director of YWCA Kaua'i. YWCA of Kaua'i, established in 1921, is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women, and fostering peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all. We serve as the primary provider of domestic violence and sexual assault services on Kaua'i. Our multifaceted approach includes crisis intervention, family violence shelter, clinical services, offender services, financial empowerment, prevention education and community outreach, and racial and social justice advocacy. Over the last 100+ years, YWCA Kaua'i has continuously adapted to meet the evolving needs of our community.

I would like to formally present my testimony regarding the Draft Report of the Shelter Working Group dated November 1, 2023. I extend my mahalo to the working group for their dedicated efforts in assessing the housing availability in Maui for individuals affected by the wildfires and I commend the emphasis this group places on centering the input of the community.

Though I am in support of the majority of this report, I am concerned that survivors of domestic violence were not included in the review and are not adequately represented in the fourth recommendation to the legislature, titled "Ensuring support for the State's most vulnerable populations". Survivors of domestic violence are uniquely vulnerable during and after natural disasters, putting them at significant risk for houselessness.

Thus, I would like to offer the following suggestions to this working group:

1. Inclusion of survivors of domestic violence in the recommendations to the legislature, in recognition that domestic violence stands as a primary cause of houselessness for women and their children due to having to escape abusive environments.
2. A dedicated allocation for the establishment of transitional housing units for survivors of domestic violence to address the unique challenges faced by survivors and their children.

YWCA Kaua'i acknowledges the documented trend of escalating domestic violence in the aftermath of natural disasters (Source: [American Psychological Association](#), 2020). Advocates across the Hawaiian Islands are seeing an unprecedented lack of housing for survivors of domestic violence, due in part to the recent wildfires on Maui. Effectively addressing future disasters in the Hawaiian Islands necessitates a proactive approach that incorporates the needs of programs which seek to support the most vulnerable populations, namely, survivors of gender-based violence.

By incorporating the recommendations above, we can contribute to a more comprehensive and equitable approach that addresses the nuanced needs of survivors of domestic violence in the context of housing.

Mahalo for considering my comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Renaé Hamilton-Cambeilh".

Renaé Hamilton-Cambeilh  
Executive Director, YWCA of Kaua'i