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COUNTY COUNCIL
COUNTY OF MAUI
200 S. HIGH STREET
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September 28, 2021

Chairperson Evalina “Nani” Watanabe
Maui County Commission on Persons with Disabilities
Maui County Office on Aging & ADRC
J. Walter Cameron Center
95 Mahalani Street, Room 20
Wailuku, HI 96793

Dear Chairperson Watanabe:

SUBJECT: **PROPOSED LEGISLATION TO PROMOTE CLIENT
SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN COUNTY GRANT AWARDS
(PAF 20-168)**

Thank you for your inquiry regarding my proposed legislation that is in the process of being vetted with County Administration and interested stakeholders. Your email of September 16, 2021 is helpful in that process of vetting. As noted in a prior email, I will be in attendance at your November 9, 2021 12:30 p.m. meeting to discuss the legislation with your Commission. This letter addresses the specific questions you asked in your email. I have also attached the current proposed legislation for your information.

In response to your specific questions, I reply to each after a restatement of your questions for ease of reference:

Question 1: What is the purpose of the proposed bill?

The proposed draft bill has a purpose statement with a clearly stated preference in the awarding of grants for applications for the provision of social services. The preference would be given to social service programs that would provide clients the ability to wean themselves from social assistance. The bill seeks the practical application of “give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.”

The bill is further recognizes the possibility of a less prosperous future for Maui County and the likely emergence of budgetary constraints. Recent events triggered by COVID-19 have created a greater interest by the taxpaying public in shifting the economic base of the county away from tourism to a broader range of activities. That shift in economic base will likely reduce the County’s revenue in the short term and prompt higher levels of budget scrutiny.

Further, it appears to me that there is an emergence of organizations seeking County grant funding that have questionable purposes. I suspect they exist only to perpetuate the conditions that they state they are solving. By incorporating a preference for organizations and agencies seeking to truly help their client base, I hope to discourage organizations with dysfunctional assistance models from seeking County grant funding.

Question 2: What are the benefits of the proposed bill to persons with disabilities on Maui?

I would hope that every organization seeking to serve those with disabilities have as part of their client goals the promotion of the fullest life possible for those individuals. As a parent with a child with a developmental disability, my hope is that the services she receives assists her in developing her potential to the best of her abilities. I want every organization that serves persons with disabilities to set goals to provide the skills, to the limits of their clients’ abilities, to have that best life. This legislation makes that goal a priority for social service organizations and agencies that seek County grants.

To the extent that this legislation prioritizes funding for those “client-first” organizations, this will provide a clear benefit to persons with disabilities. To the extent that organizations that do not put their clients first are defunded, that will increase the availability of county grants for those who do.

Question 3: What are the drawbacks of the proposed bill to persons with permanent disabilities on Maui?

As with any public policy measure, there could be some negative outcomes. One of the challenges is the increased effort for both the County Administration and for the organizations/agencies submitting grant applications. The County Administration through the Department of Housing and Human Concerns noted that some programs are not, by design, expected to promote client self-sufficiency. Further, the Department noted that establishing

the measurement of the degree of self-sufficiency especially between programs that serve different populations would be a challenge.

The County Charter clearly separates the duties of Council and the Administration. The Council, as the County’s legislative branch, adopts public policy goals and directions. It is the Administration’s responsibility to determine how to implement measures to achieve those public policy goals and directions. If this bill amending Title 3 is adopted by Council, it will be up to the Administration to determine how it is implemented.

Given the stated purposes of the bill, I would welcome any proposed amendments or considerations from the Commission on Persons with Disabilities that would improve the likely efficacy of the bill while reducing likely drawbacks.

Question 3: What feedback have you received from social service providers who receive grants from the County regarding the proposed bill?

The draft bill was sent to the County Administration in May 2021 for review and comment. The Department of Housing and Human Concerns responded quickly with their suggestions and concerns. We are waiting for the Mayor’s Office of Economic Development, which also administers grants, for a similar review. The bill has not been circulated directly to social service providers. We would welcome any and all review by those providers.

Question 4: If the proposed bill passes, what actions will the Council take, if any, to assist people with permanent disabilities who can never become fully independent and who can no longer receive social services because the agencies they currently receive services from are not in the preferred category?

As an individual Councilmember, I cannot speak for the Council as a whole. I can reply with my expectations as to action I may propose to address unintended consequences of this proposed legislation.

I do not expect unintended consequences since I expect all agencies are capable of demonstrating their desire to encourage their clients to progress to the best of their abilities towards independence. The bill calls for a preference for agencies/program that clearly state in their applications that intent (versus agencies/programs that do not). The preference does not mean that programs

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that serve populations that have limited practical opportunity to achieve client independence would be excluded from County grants. The Department of Housing and Human Concerns suggested that only similar programs/agencies be compared to assess their intent so that programs/agencies would not be penalized based on the nature of their client base. I am open to that suggestion.

Social service agencies in Maui County should not expect that Maui County will always be their sole source of funding. There is always the potential that County Council will be required to cut the fiscal year budget to match projected reductions in revenues, since the County is required by law to adopt a balanced fiscal year budget. There are activities and programs that the County is obligated by law to fund in each budget. Grants are typically not an obligation on the County but an optional appropriation. As a member of County Council, I would encourage programs/agencies seeking County grant funding to try to maximize the amount of funding obtained from the State and Federal governments and private charitable entities. Such additional non-County funding demonstrates the grantee's ability and willingness to leverage limited County funding to maximize their service provision to their client base.

Thank you for this opportunity to address your questions. I look forward to discussing this matter with you at your November 9, 2021 meeting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tasha Kama", written in a cursive style.

TASHA KAMA
Presiding Officer Pro Tempore

cc: Mayor Victorino
Director Lori Tsuhako, Department of Housing and Human Concerns
Director JoAnn Inamasu, Office of Economic Development

ORDINANCE NO. _____

BILL NO. _____ (2021)

A BILL FOR AN ORDINANCE AMENDING TITLE 3, MAUI COUNTY CODE,
RELATIING TO THE MAUI COUNTY GRANTS PROGRAM

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE COUNTY OF MAUI:

SECTION 1. The purpose of this ordinance is to improve the long-term viability of Maui County grants program by providing a clearly stated preference in the awarding of grants for applications for the provision of social services. The preference would be given to social service programs that would provide clients the ability to wean themselves from social assistance – the practical application of “give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.”

SECTION 2. Chapter 3.36, Maui County Code is hereby amended by adding thereto a new section to be appropriately designated and to read as follows:

“3.36.200 Self-Sufficiency Preference. In the review of a grant application submitted by a social service provider to any agency of the County governed by this chapter of the county code, the agency must give a clearly stated preference to providers offering programs that are designed to reduce the dependency of their clients on a long-term basis. That preference must be substantial and be included in any request or solicitation by the agency for grant applications.”

SECTION 3. New material is underscored. In printing this bill, the County Clerk need not include the underscoring.

SECTION 4. This ordinance shall take effect upon its approval.

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND LEGALITY:

Deputy Corporation Counsel
County of Maui
PAF 20-168a