

March 26, 2020

Council of the County of Maui
200 South High Street
Wailuku, Hawaii 96793

Via Email Only

Re: March 27, 2020 Council of the County of Maui Agenda

Dear Council of the County of Maui:

The County of Maui is under emergency rules issued by Mayor Victorino to stay at home and work from home until April 30, 2020, similar to the entire State of Hawaii.

Therefore, it is unclear why the Maui County Council is holding a full, regular meeting on March 27, 2020. No oral testimony will be accepted, and only written testimony will be accepted via e-mail or fax 24 hours prior to the meeting. Moreover, the meeting will not be open to the public but will be televised on Akaku: Maui Community Media and livestreamed.

The parameters by which the March 27, 2020 Maui County Council meeting will be held violates the fundamental principles of open government, transparency, accountability, and the foundations of our democracy.

While the public may be able to submit written testimony and view the proceedings on public television or over the internet, this does not allow for public participation in our democracy. Public participation – interacting and having an exchange with our elected and government officials – is the cornerstone of our democracy.

Further, there is no information about the accessibility of the March 27, 2020 Maui County Council meeting for the disability community. Additionally, there are no guidelines as to how the meeting will be run. Will the meeting be suspended if the livestream is interrupted regardless of the television broadcast? Will the meeting be recorded for rebroadcasting and reposting on government websites?

To reiterate it is unclear why a full, regular Maui County Council meeting must be held now in the midst of a pandemic, while the people are under a stay at home, work from home order. Common Cause Hawaii hopes that any reduction in public participation in government proceedings will not result in exploitation by interest groups for personal, monetary, or other gain. This is a time for our country to be united to protect each other as we face COVID-19, and that includes respecting and protecting public participation in and oversight of government.

Thus, Common Cause Hawaii asks you to cancel your March 27, 2020 meeting forthwith or at least only focus on priority government matters, such as responding to COVID-19, and provide for the community to participate via video and/or audio means (and not just observe after providing written testimony). Democracy matters in these times of crisis.

Very respectfully yours,

Sandy Ma
Executive Director
Common Cause Hawaii

Copy to: David Raatz, Supervising Legislative Attorney (via email only)

