

**RES23-002**  
**Testimony**

**MISC. COMM. 42**

BUDGET (BUD)

## **BUDGET (BUD) Meeting**

Meeting Date: Feb 7, 2023 @ 09:00 AM

Support: 7

Oppose: 0

I wish to comment: 0

Name: Tracey Wiltgen	Email: tracey@mediatehawaii.org	Zip: 96814
Representing: The Mediation Center of the Pacific, Inc.	Position: Support	Submitted: Feb 2, 2023 @ 02:40 PM
Name: Allison Skilbred	Email: allisons@keyproject.org	Zip: 96744
Representing: Self	Position: Support	Submitted: Feb 3, 2023 @ 11:35 AM
Name: Innocenta Sound-Kikku	Email: innocenta.soundkikku@gmail.com	Zip: 96819
Representing: Self	Position: Support	Submitted: Feb 3, 2023 @ 02:41 PM
<p>Testimony:</p> <p>This program has kept thousands, including numerous households of our Micronesian community and myself stay housed. Many of our people are still recovering so your support will be life changing for many of them. I want to also take this time to thank the City and County of Honolulu for your service and commitment to residents of Oahu for which we are also benefitting and grateful for.</p>		
Name: Will Kane	Email: willk@strategies360.com	Zip: 96813
Representing: Hawaii Gas	Position: Support	Submitted: Feb 6, 2023 @ 08:49 AM
Name: Agnes Malate	Email: armalate@yahoo.com	Zip: 96707
Representing: FilCom CARES	Position: Support	Submitted: Feb 6, 2023 @ 09:00 AM
Name: Barbara Tom	Email: barbara.yukie@gmail.com	Zip: 96701
Representing: Waipahu Safe Haven Center	Position: Support	Submitted: Feb 6, 2023 @ 01:22 PM
Name: Zhizi Xiong	Email: Alohadinvedesign@gmail.com	Zip: 96817
Representing: CARE Community Advocacy Research Education	Position: Support	Submitted: Feb 7, 2023 @ 08:44 AM
<p>Testimony:</p> <p>Aloha Chair, Vice Chair &amp; the Budget committee,</p> <p>On behalf of CARES, we are testifying in strong support of the measure.</p> <p>Zhizi xiong</p>		

**Meeting Date: Tuesday, February 7, 2023**

**City Council Committee on Budget**

Submitted by The Mediation Center of the Pacific, Inc.

Resolution 23-2 – Relating to Reprogramming of American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds Program for the Rental and Utility Relief Program

To: Chair Cordero, Vice-Chair Weyer, and fellow committee members,

**The Mediation Center of the Pacific (MCP) is submitting testimony in support of Reprogramming the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds Program for the Rental and Utility Relief Program (RURP).** Since April 2021, RURP helped more than 15,000 families on Oahu stay safely housed, 60% of whom were families with a woman as the head of the household. And while many of the tenants who were assisted during that period were negatively impacted by the pandemic, tenants today continue to struggle to pay their rent. It is only with the support of RURP, that they will be able to remain housed.

MCP has first-hand experience with the value of the RURP and the positive impact it has made on keeping people housed. In 2021, due to the pandemic and the moratorium on evictions, Act 57 was created to require landlords to offer tenants who were behind on their rent, the opportunity to mediate before the landlord filed for eviction. As a result of Act 57 which remained in effect from August 7, 2021, through August 6, 2022, MCP conducted 1,379 mediations that enabled 1,141 tenants to remain in their homes. Approximately 90% of those tenants relied on RURP to pay the back rent they owed to their landlords, as well as negotiate realistic payment plans moving forward. Without RURP, most landlords would not have negotiated agreements allowing the tenants to remain in the residence, and instead, they would have moved forward with the eviction process, ultimately leaving many tenants homeless.

While Act 57 ended and the impacts of the pandemic have subsided, tenants continue to struggle to pay their rent. This is evidenced by the fact that between August 2022 through January 2023, MCP received over 600 requests for mediation from tenants being evicted. Unfortunately, without rental assistance to support payment plans between tenant and landlord, most tenants now face eviction with the possibility of becoming homeless.

Reprogramming the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds Program for RURP is critical for keeping struggling tenants and their families housed. MCP strongly supports the reprogramming of these funds.

Sincerely,



Tracey S. Wiltgen  
Executive Director

The Mediation Center of the Pacific, Inc.

Written Testimony-

Allison Skilbred  
KEY Project  
Impact + Grants Coordinator

Position: SUPPORT of RES23-002 for funds being allocated to the Rent and Utility Relief Program

Testimony:

My name is Allison Skilbred and I am in support of additional funds being allocated to the Rent and Utility Relief Program. I am the Impact and Grants Coordinator for KEY Project in Kahalu'u. We are a community center that services Kāne'ohe to Kahuku. Since April of 2021, KEY has been active as community navigators in a group of nonprofits that were assisting Windward families complete the Rent and Utility Program applications and collect, review, and submit supporting documents. Over the 2 years of working on the ground and in the community, KEY alone was able to help 647 windward families submit completed applications. I have first hand accounts of seeing the impact that this program has made for our windward community and how the partnerships with existing organizations can greatly benefit the distribution of assistance. Even after the many months of this project, there is still a significant need for rental and utility relief.

February 7, 2023

The Honorable Radiant Cordero Chair  
The Honorable Matt Weyer, Vice Chair  
Members of the Committee on Budget,  
City and County of Honolulu  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

**RE: Reso 23-2 - RELATING TO REPROGRAMMING OF AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT OF 2021 (PUB. L. 117-2), STATE AND LOCAL FISCAL RECOVERY FUNDS PROGRAM FOR THE RENTAL AND UTILITY RELIEF PROGRAM.**

Aloha Chair Cordero and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for allowing Hawaii Gas to provide testimony in support of Reso 23-2.

The Rental and Utility Relief Program (RURP) has already made a significant impact in assisting residents across the island to stay in their homes reduce their chance of becoming homelessness. By designating additional funding, this Council is ensuring the continuation of a desperately need lifeline for many our most vulnerable residents.

During the pandemic many residents were unable to pay their rent or utility bills, which impacted not only them, but the landlords they rented from and the companies that provide utility services.. By using this funding, over 90% of residents who participated in this the program we're able to pay back the money they owed. This allowed the renters to stay in their homes and the landlords the ability to pay their mortgage and other associated costs.

The costs of living in Hawaii are already some of the highest in the nation. With the 2+ years of a global pandemic, events in Ukraine and skyrocketing inflation driving those costs to record high levels, Hawaii Gas believes that by the City & County of Honolulu providing an assistance program like this, helps our most financially impacted residents in a meaningful and positive way. We urge the Committee to adopt this resolution and move this program forward.

Mahalo for your consideration.

**Hawaii Gas**

Hawaii Gas distributes a blend of gas that ranges from low-carbon to zero-carbon to negative carbon emissions through approximately 1,100 miles of mostly underground utility pipeline statewide. Our main utility system includes a blend of gas that includes Synthetic Natural Gas (SNG), Renewable Natural Gas (RNG), and Hydrogen. Despite representing less than 1% of the greenhouse gases emitted into Hawaii's atmosphere, we are working to conscientiously reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by pursuing cost-effective, local, renewable energy projects

**AGNES R. MALATE**  
**armalate@yahoo.com**

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**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF RES23-002**

**Honolulu City Council Budget Committee**

February 7, 2023, 9:00 am

Honolulu Hale

My name is Agnes Malate and I am in full support of RES23-002 relating to the "Reprogramming of American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (Pub.L. 117-2), State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds for the Rental and Utility Relief Program."

During the pandemic I have been working to assist the Filipino community and others who have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic in my various roles as the co-chair of FilCom CARES, president of Ethnic Education Hawai'i, and director of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Health Careers Opportunity Program. Stable housing is critical to the health and well-being of families and the Rental and Utility Relief Program (RURP) has been a lifesaver for those struggle to pay rent in Hawai'i's high cost of living, which is the highest rental cost in the nation.

FilCom CARES is a project of the Filipino Community Center. Its mission is *growing a stronger and healthier Filipino community in Hawai'i through collaborative partnerships* and has partnered with the City's Office of Economic Revitalization to assist the community apply for housing rental assistance. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and I urge you to pass the RES23-002.

RES23-002     February 7, 2023

Aloha Council Members,

My name is Barbara Tom and I am the Director of the Waipahu Safe Haven Immigrant/Migrant Resource Center. We are currently working with Catholic Charities providing eight bilingual interpreters from the Compact Nations; three are Marshallese, two Chuukese, two Kosraen and one Pohnapean. Their work provides much needed language access for those from their communities who were economically affected by the Pandemic. All individuals we serviced are considered to be at or below the poverty level even with several members working in the household.

Currently, the interpreters are working to recertify to complete paperwork for those that are struggling with language access and require an extension of their resources. However, we continue to receive requests weekly sometimes 20 plus requesting a new application for rent and or utilities assistance. These are folks who have not heard about the program or due to language difficulties have not been able to access the needed services. According to our interpreters, these requests are from individuals who are working in minimum paying occupations.

I am asking the Council to consider funding the Rental Assistance for a temporary reopening at the end of the first quarter. This will allow this community to catch up while they continue to work in our community.

Barbara Tom, Director

Waipahu Safe Haven Immigrant/Migrant Resource Center 94-420 Farrington Hwy.

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