

March 17, 2022

Maui County Council
200 S. High Street
Wailuku, HI 96793

Dear Honorable Council,

My name is Courtney Dumlao, I am a resident of Maui, wife, proud mother of two Hawaii Army National Guardsman, author, entrepreneur, community social worker and proud US Citizen of this great country.

My writing to you today is to speak on behalf of the citizens of Hawaii and the nation. I have a heartfelt plea to advocate for the expedient streamlining of the permitting process for domestic oil production immediately. Please, if you have any respect for the people our state, advocate to reopen our own pipelines within the United States to generate income for our nation, jobs for our citizens and relieve our burden of energy dependency on nations we have poor relationships with.

The cost of living in Hawaii has risen expediently. As a state and even worse, as a nation, we went from thriving to failing seemingly overnight.

Please understand, my husband and I understand sacrifice for the good of others. My husband works in the hospitality industry while I work for social services in the nonprofit sector full time. As teen parents and entrepreneurs, we have always lived paycheck to paycheck, understanding this is the cost we pay to live in Hawaii with children, homes, and businesses. As church members, we proudly give until it hurts. We live off of 70% of our income because we plan for the future and give, donate and serve where we can. We are proud to say we have sacrificed our biggest blessings, our children, to the state of Hawaii and secondarily, the United States. Today, both of our sons serve as Hawaii Army National Guardsman...one is a senior about to graduate and attend basic training, while the other is employed full time in the hospitality sector and construction industry.

I have never been more afraid of the future our generation is leaving to the next. As a mother, former Child Welfare Services Social Worker and community member this world has become a place that I fear is no longer safe or thriving for the next generation.

This is where you play a part in how our next generation grows up. You directly play a role in whether the next generation thrives or dies and you can effect change on levels I cannot.

In the social services sector, I see more and more local and transient families who are suffering to make ends meet. I am not directly speaking of those on poverty level, but those who are above the threshold of all forms of social assistance. The ones who work 40+ hours at a decent wage job only to be completely derailed when a loved one passes away and has to choose between rent and funeral costs.

These families experience the struggle of working full time and unable to qualify for food stamps and low-income housing. Due to the rapidly rising cost of living in Hawaii; costs directly correlated to rising fuel costs, these families are facing homelessness at a rapid pace. Utilities, food, supplies, gas, transportation, water, rent/mortgage are all rising at incredibly high rates of speed.

While their monthly income has not risen at all in the past few years, and with the COVID relief moratorium on rent and mortgages ending, these families face the difficult decisions to leave the island for cheaper cost of living. This decision comes at an even greater risk. The risk of leaving their social supports like family, churches and hanai family because they can no longer afford to rent, put food on the table and transportation in Hawaii. Supports that are proven to strengthen a family. Leaving these social supports places significant strain on those who are economically challenged. It begins to seep into the fabric of the family and sadly the community as tensions in relationships between partners is aggravated by stress: oftentimes causing fighting and sadly, explosive domestic violence. This in turn causes trauma and stress to the children in the home. Even more compelling, this stress and disastrous results do not discriminate based upon how far a person or family is above the poverty line.

Trauma is showing up in schools as ADHD, violence, self-harm, suicidal ideation, eating disorders, hoarding, and sadly suicide. To say we have a mental health crisis in our community is putting it lightly.

Parents are self-soothing with drugs, alcohol, and other means to escape the stress of parenting under these unprecedented times. The children are left to pick up the pieces with no support, isolation and self soothe themselves with no guidance, mentorship, or finances.

In short, I am humbly begging you to do your part and stand up for change at our nation's capital and in our beautiful state of Hawaii. It is time for our leaders to get comfortable with being uncomfortable like the rest of the state and nation. I am asking you to step out of your comfort zone of operation; be transparent, and take a bold stand for family unity, community change and effective policies that make a real difference. Policies that do not stress out the average citizen trying to eke out a living in Hawaii.

I am asking you to dig in deeper than you have ever done before: using honesty, humility, empathy, compassion, and wisdom to guide you in your decision making and support. I am praying for your leadership, protection, efficacy and discernment to make effective changes to our community. Changes that are not band aids for the short term but have immediate and long term effects.

I know what I am asking for sounds impossible, but it is not. I am doing my part on the front lines, in the broken houses with the mother's and father's who struggle daily. Wiping their tears, holding their hand and offering as much as I can to assist them. Reassuring them that things will get better. Sadly, sometimes, it is not enough.

Here in Hawaii, we are proud to say we are the melting pot of our nation. We have the best and the brightest leaders, community members full of love and aloha. We have YOU to stand in the gap and intercede on our behalf. This community, our beautiful Hawaii Nei, and nation, need you to roll up your sleeves, come to the table, to serve from the lowest position possible to help us reach the highest goals.

I thank you for your efforts thus far, and for your time in reading this call to action. Hawaii needs you to be integral, strong, bold, courageous and to rise up in a way you have never done before.

With great respect and gratitude,

Courtney Dumlao 808.250-6446 Makawao Maui County