

For Immediate Release: October 15, 2020

Press Release by:

Councilmember Michael J. Molina



Molina asks Mayor to extend the Hawaii Emergency Partnership (H.E.L.P.) Assistance Program

WAILUKU – Today Councilmember Michael J. Molina transmitted a request to Mayor Michael Victorino to extend the H.E.L.P. program to December 31, 2020 and increase the appropriation \$3 million to the program.

The H.E.L.P. program provides financial assistance for Maui County residents to pay for essential needs due to a layoff, reduction in hours or loss of income related to COVID-19.

Applications for H.E.L.P. are being accepted until October 31, 2020, the program is schedule to terminate on that date.

Accordingly, Councilmember Molina sent correspondence dated October 15, 2020, to the Mayor requesting his consideration of extending the program and to increase its funding.

According to Debbie Cabebe, Chief Executive Office, Maui Economic Opportunity, Inc. (MEO), as of Friday, October 9, 2020, MEO has processed over 10,000 applications totaling more than \$5.2 million in assistance.

“This is truly a substantial benefit to our residents, said Molina. I am proud that this program is able to reach so many of our families in need.”

At the end of May 2020, Molina requested an increased appropriation of \$5 million to H.E.L.P. with an increase of the monthly payment to families.

On July 19, 2020, the Mayor increased the appropriation \$3 million to H.E.L.P., which was a boost in the arm to the many families struggling as a result of job loss and a reduction in unemployment benefits.

Therefore, before the program runs out Councilmember Molina requested the Mayor to consider the following recommendations:

1. Increase the appropriation to the program an additional \$3 million;
2. Make the grant a one-time payment of \$1,500 to \$3,000 depending on household size; and
3. Extend the program to December 31, 2020.

“Even though travel may be opening in limited numbers, jobs are still scarce and the potential for increased unemployment benefits are still an uncertainty,” said Molina.

“There is no certainty as to how this new opening in travel will impact our health and safety, said Molina. Therefore, it should be made a priority to continue the H.E.L.P. program and increase its funds to assist families through the end of the year.”

** Mike Molina is Chair of the Council’s Governance, Ethics, and Transparency Committee. He holds the council seat for the Makawao-Haiku-Paia residency area.*

Go to mike.molina@mauicounty.us for more information or call 270-5507.

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