

Date 9-4-24	September 4, 2024
Name (Print)	Lorrie Betsill Nielson

WRITTEN SUBMISSION TO BE INCLUDED IN OFFICIAL HEARING RECORD

DRAFT

**Committee on Oversight and Accountability
Field Hearing on Assessing the Federal Government's Response
to the 2023 Maui Wildfires**

We want to hear your story. Below please provide your comments regarding your experiences or thoughts on the federal response and recovery to the Lahaina wildfires. Your response will help inform the Committee's oversight and any recommendations for future congressional action.

Up until September 2022, I had three offices in Lahaina town.

I was fortunate to re-locate ~~two~~^{two} offices in North West Maui, saving me from physical loss, and therefore devastation on August 8, 2023.

Since the fire after a year of trying to keep two small businesses afloat, with four employees, I made the hard decision just Monday to close two businesses as I await the west Maui economic community's recovery.



I am deeply concerned for the remaining two businesses I have left in West Maui; my retail shop in Kaanapali, and a small beach wedding and elopement business.

If those two businesses do not sustain our family over the next five months, as we are a dual income household, we will have to consider moving to Montana or Arkansas to start over.

At the age of 43, a Lahaina resident of 20 years, having owned 6 successful businesses, I am DEEPLY concerned for the economy of West Maui, specifically small businesses.

We need more support other than the SBA. Their process is difficult to work with. Grants, please help us!

9-4-24 - Lorrie Betsill Nielson

FINAL ✓

I am writing on behalf of small businesses of West Maui. Since the August 8, 2023 fires, in the year that has passed, I have closed down two businesses, both once thrived in West Maui. Gross sales over \$40,000.00, instantly on August 9, those revenues went to zero.

A year has passed. I have applied for assistance with SBA un-successfully and also for County grants, and although a grant has been approved, the County does not have the fiscal department to process my request.

I have a small retail shop in Kaanapali I could use support with, a grant, something. It is a new business, call it a pivot, however I am proceeding with caution as hotel occupancy rates are down 50% from this time last year.

Many of us just need small



financial boosts of support. Money extended to the small businesses of West Maui will stimulate our economy.

In addition, might I propose that HTA puts commercials in states that bring visitors that spend money (ie. Texas & Arizona).

We have to be innovative, Front Street is gone and Kaanapali is not enough. We have to keep small businesses alive on West Maui!

Please help us with innovative ideas & financial resources.

With Gratitude -

Janie Betsell Nielson
West Maui resident
and business owner
mother & wife

