

## **Testimony Before the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs**

**Speaker:** [Your Name], Resident of Maui County

Aloha Director Ando and Administrator Leong,

My name is [Your Name], and I am a concerned resident of Maui County. Today, I stand before you to voice my deep concerns regarding the proposed franchise renewal for Spectrum/Charter, particularly in the wake of the unsettling precedent set by the recent renewal in Kauai. This proposed renewal for Maui County seriously threatens the survival of Akaku, our community's vital media resource.

Despite Akaku grappling with a permanent \$100,000 annual shortfall due to lost subscriber revenue from the wildfires, the DCCA is considering diverting nearly 20% of Akaku's revenue—amounting to more than \$3 million over 15 years—to Spectrum to support a secretive, state-run internet. This move would not only bolster Spectrum's revenue, which already extracts approximately \$100 million annually from MauiNui, but it would also significantly diminish the quality and availability of essential local services.

These services include critical reporting on Lahaina's wildfire recovery, civic affairs, The Maui Daily News Report, election coverage, emergency alerts, and live event coverage. Additionally, this shift jeopardizes media training programs for our youth and elders and threatens to strip the island of Molokai of its media identity.

Adding insult to injury, the DCCA plans to allow Spectrum to continue forcing Akaku to broadcast in substandard standard definition unless it pays exorbitant fees to broadcast in HDTV—a clear financial burden on an already struggling entity.

This major shift in DCCA policy over the past 30 years lacks transparency and adequate public engagement, which are essential for ensuring fair and equitable media coverage and proper community representation.

I urge the DCCA to reevaluate these proposed changes and to engage in a more open and comprehensive community consultation process. A new community ascertainment study is crucial to accurately reflect the current needs and interests of our community, ensuring that any renewed franchise aligns with these needs rather than undermines them. Moreover, Maui deserves a written guarantee within the Franchise Renewal agreement that reinstates Akaku's legacy funding of 3% of gross cable revenue for the duration of the franchise period.

Thank you for your attention to these pressing issues. We expect and hope for a decision that fully respects the rights and needs of all stakeholders involved and that upholds the integrity and mission of community media in Maui County.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

