

DRAFT

DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM (DBEDT)

**MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY-BASED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (CBED)
ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING**

TUESDAY, AUGUST 19, 2025, AT 10:00 A.M.

**No. 1 Capitol District Building,
250 South Hotel Street, 5th Floor Conference Room
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813**

AND VIA VIRTUAL APPLICATION ZOOM: VIDEO/AUDIO CONFERENCE

Advisory Members Present were:

Karen Barr	-	Advisory Council Member (Oahu)
Roberta Melton	-	Advisory Council Member (Kauai)
Kaiana Niezman	-	Advisory Council Member (Hawaii)
Colleen McAluney	-	Advisory Council Member (Oahu)
Teena Rasmussen	-	Advisory Council Member (Maui)
Matthew Loke	-	Department of Agriculture (Ex-Officio)
Michelle Agbigay	-	Advisory Council Member (Hawaii)
Jason Ushijima For	-	Department of Business, Economic
Dennis Ling (Ex-Officio)		Development & Tourism (DBEDT)

Guests:

Eric Bowman	-	Feed the Hunger Fund (FTHF)
William Smith	-	Kauai, SBDC

Staff:

John Cole	-	Attorney General's Office
Timothy Tiu	-	DBEDT
Ram Arnan D. Braza	-	DBEDT

Apologies:

Josephine (Poni) Askew	-	OHA Representative
Dennis Ling (Ex-Officio)	-	Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism (DBEDT)

CALL TO ORDER:

Mr. Ushijima called the meeting to order on Tuesday, August 19, at 10:00 a.m.
All members and guests participated via ZOOM.

▪ **Welcome Current Council Members and Introduction of any Guests:**

Mr. Ushijima welcomed all present.

A roll call vote was conducted, and all members indicated that they were alone at their respective locations.

Mr. Ushijima introduced Ms. Agbigay, the new CBED advisory council member representing Hawaii County. He also introduced Mr. Smith, a CBED advisory council member candidate from Kauai.

OLD BUSINESS:

Approval of Minutes of July 15, 2025:

Minutes of the July 15, 2025, meeting were distributed and reviewed by the Council. Mr. Ushijima asked if there were any comments and/or corrections to the Minutes. There were none and he asked for a motion to approve the Minutes.

The motion was made by Ms. Rasmussen and seconded by Ms. Melton to approve the Minutes of the July 15, 2025 Meeting, as presented.

Mr. Ushijima asked if there were any objections and there were none.

The motion to adopt the July 15, 2025 Minutes was approved unanimously.

Public Testimony:

There was no public testimony.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Approval of CBED Loan of \$25,000 to Start Fresh Maui, LLC:

Mr. Ushijima outlined that the company, Start Fresh Maui, LLC dba Maui Chili Chili Oil, a Maui-based business, has applied for a DBEDT/CBED loan seeking a total of \$50,000. The loan would be in partnership with Feed the Hunger Fund who would co-lend with DBEDT/CBED for \$25,000 and the DBEDT/CEBD portion would be for \$25,000. The company is managed by a husband-and-wife team, Deron and Kit Furukawa. He invited Mr. Bowman, Loan Officer of Feed the Hunger Fund (FTHF), to present information about Start Fresh Maui, LLC and owner Mr. Deron Furukawa to the committee.

Mr. Bowman introduced the company, Start Fresh Maui, LLC dba Maui Chili Chili Oil, to the council. He touched on the company's story and its financial history. Mr. Bowman

emphasized that the company has been profitable and that there were no issues approving the loan on Feed the Hunger Fund's side. He stated that this loan is to remodel rented space for the company's commercial kitchen.

Mr. Ushijima stated that this company is located in an Enterprise Zone and they have participated in several events hosted by HiSTEP and DBEDT's Hawai'i Made Programs.

Ms. Rasmussen stated that she worked with Kit Furukawa before they started this business. She asked about the company's kitchen situation and if they are building their own kitchen. Mr. Bowman stated that they are currently renting a commercial kitchen while they are building their own kitchen. He emphasized that once their new commercial kitchen is built, it will give them more autonomy and control over their production.

Mr. Neizman asked about the company's average revenues over the last three years. Mr. Bowman said that the business had \$60k in 2022, \$150k in 2023, and \$230k in 2024. He said that conservative gross revenue projections for 2025 puts it at \$200k.

Mr. Neizman asked if the global debt service coverage ratio used in the matrix is post-loan. Mr. Bowman confirmed that it is post-loan and includes the household and business incomes.

Mr. Neizman asked if there were any comments on Mr. Furukawa's credit score. Mr. Bowman indicated that Mr. Furukawa's individual credit score reflects a typical growing business and since there's no delinquency and credit does not look unmanageable, there is no cause for concern.

Ms. Barr commented that she had personal experience with the product and that it is something she enjoys.

Ms. Agbigay asked about the company's staffing plan on scaling production and order fulfillment. Mr. Bowman said that there is currently no definitive plan to hire more employees since the company is focused on finishing the kitchen first, but he also added that it is one area that the business needs to think about once the facility is completed and they start to ramp up production.

Mr. Ushijima thanked everyone for their input and asked if there were any further questions. Since there were none, he called for a motion to recommend approval of the CBED loan of \$25,000 to Start Fresh Maui, LLC dba Maui Chili Chili Oil.

Ms. Rasmussen made a motion to recommend approval of the loan and Ms. Barr seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken with all Council members voting unanimously.

2. Review of the CBED Loan Portfolio to Date:

Mr. Ushijima stated that there are currently twenty (20) CBED loans made to eighteen different companies. He also stated that two companies fully paid off their loans within the last year.

Mr. Ushijima stated that the CBED loans are supporting one hundred ninety-nine jobs (199) in Oahu, Maui, Kauai, and Hawaii island. He also presented other statistics on the companies with active CBED loans.

Mr. Ushijima stated that the revolving loan fund with Federal Economic Development Agency (EDA) monies has a current balance of \$258k but the actual available money is only \$71k because of pending loan disbursements. He stated that since it is a revolving fund, some money does go back into the account in the form of loan payments and account interest averaging to about \$90k every six months.

Mr. Ushijima mentioned that the EDA does not have grant opportunities available this year due to recent federal funding changes. He continued that there may be EDA grant opportunities next year but it is not guaranteed, and the award amount may not be in the million-dollar range.

Mr. Neizman asked if there were any thoughts or process to try to increase the percentage of Native Hawaiian & Pacific Islander (NHPI) receiving CBED loans. Mr. Ushijima said that CBED has no NHPI owned business loan requirement, however that it was part of CBED's mission to help underserved communities. He noted that CBED encourages the council and resource partners to recommend businesses to apply for a CBED loan.

Ms. Rasmussen said that it would be helpful to get a report or update from previous borrowers just to see how those companies are doing.

Ms. Barr supported Ms. Rasmussen's suggestion. She said that these success stories could also be submitted to the legislature together with the request for funding so the legislators can see the impact the CBED program is making.

Ms. Melton suggested that we prioritize loans as they come in given the current state of funding. She also suggested that the CBED Advisory Council members approach their respective legislators to help support CBED's funding request.

Mr. Loke asked if CBED has sufficient funds for technical assistance. Mr. Ushijima said that there is a separate account with State monies and there is \$171k available but additional funding from the legislature is needed.

Mr. Ushijima suggested conducting a strategy session in October or later to discuss CBED's mission and priorities for moving forward once more details on funding is available.

Announcements

Mr. Ushijima announced that DBEDT is hosting an AI & Cloud Innovation Summit on September 10, 2025, at the Hawaii Convention Center.

NEXT MEETING:

September 16, 2025, at 10:00 a.m.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting ended at 10:50 a.m., on a motion by Ms. McAluney and seconded by Mr. Loke.

There were no objections and the motion was approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,



Jason S. Ushijima
Branch Chief, BSB BDSD

8/25/2025

Date