

**CITY COUNCIL**  
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU  
530 SOUTH KING STREET, ROOM 202  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813-3065  
TELEPHONE: (808) 768-5010 • FAX: (808) 768-5011

ESTHER KIA'ĀINA  
VICE CHAIR  
HONOLULU CITY COUNCIL, DISTRICT 3  
Email: [ekiaaina@honolulu.gov](mailto:ekiaaina@honolulu.gov)  
Telephone: (808) 768-5003

**MEMORANDUM**

DATE: September 7, 2022  
TO: Council Administrative Services  
FROM: Councilmember Esther Kia'aina

SUBJECT: Travel Report for the 2022 Annual Conference & Exposition

Attached you will find my travel report for the National Association of Counties Annual Conference held in Adams County, Colorado from July 21 to July 24, 2022.

We attended the NACo annual conference and exposition from July 21 to July 24, 2022. We attended multiple meetings, general sessions, workshops, and informal meetings with other NACo members and other Hawai'i county representatives.

We left the annual conference with the following main takeaways:

- NACo is a resource for legislative and policy ideas, and we intend to look further into numerous policies with regards to affordable housing, supporting women's reproductive rights, and other important issues.
- In addition to coordinating with the State on allocation of Bipartisan Infrastructure funding, the City should also encourage the federal government to identify points of contacts from each of the major federal departments for county officials to coordinate with as well.
- Other counties across the country are implementing Opioid epidemic treatment, recovery, harm reduction, and other strategies to address the opioid epidemic with funding from the recent Opioid settlement, and the State and counties can learn from these efforts to ensure that the over \$73 million being distributed throughout the state is used most effectively.
- Collaboration with NACo and NACo individual members can be a powerful tool to advocate for change in federal laws and policies to protect our constituents on the topics of gun reform, women's reproductive rights, protection of election officials, allocation of funding for various county priorities and needs, etc.
- NACo has many tools available to support members, including the Housing Matchmaker Tool, the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund Advocacy Toolkit, Key Indicators of Economic Mobility, and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Key Terms of Definitions.
- NACo can be a platform for sharing the City's innovative programs and achievements (e.g. the City's recognition as one of the fastest distributors of Emergency Rental Assistance in the nation).
- The vendors that attend the NACo conference provide services and products that may be beneficial for the City to look further into, including Pallet (a leader in shelter village solutions), Granicus (which designs and manages government websites, including previously the City Council's website), and various short-term rental compliance software companies.

## **Agriculture and Rural Affairs Policy Steering Committee: Subcommittees Meeting**

The subcommittee is responsible for all matters pertaining to USDA agriculture, rural development programs, rural renewable energy development, research and extension, food safety, and conservation programs.

The subcommittee meeting included discussions with federal and industry partners to learn more about topics of interest to the committee, including committee priorities as they relate to federal policymaking including the 2023 Farm Bill and regulations such as Waters of the U.S.

The panelists included, Sylvia Quast, Senior Advisor, Office of Water, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Elizabeth Archuleta, Director, Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Tim Palmer, Immediate Past President, National Association of Conservation Districts, Elizabeth Ossowski, Program Coordinator, NOAA/National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS), and Joaquin Altoro, Rural Housing Service Administrator.

There was a discussion on the following priorities:

- Rural development - urging Congress to adequately fund Rural Housing, Rural Business Cooperative and Rural Utility Services during the annual appropriations process, create an interagency taskforce led by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to help bolster resources for rural counties, provide adequate support of the USDA to look at new and innovative ways to build community capacity and introduce economic enhancement opportunities for rural businesses (e.g. through addressing housing, poverty and outmigration)
- Rural Infrastructure - urging congress to appropriate federal funds for rural roads, bridges, transit service and air service, water and wastewater infrastructure, broadband infrastructure; requiring USDA to recognize and follow county and regional development plans developed by local and elected officials to improve coordination; and strengthening the healthcare delivery system in rural America, including ambulatory services
- Agriculture - reauthorization of the farm bill, including expansion of crop insurance program and federal subsidies that help support agriculture communities, mitigate erosion and improve water quality; support of policies that strengthen federal nutrition programs, access to healthy foods, protection of food supply; support funding and expansion of backlogged farm conservation programs; support for measures to retain, protect, and improve agricultural lands consistent with local policies; increased coordination with EPA so that best science is used with regards to regulating pesticide use so that important pesticides can still be used while also keeping our community safe; support for federal incentives rather than penalties for implementation of best management practices; creation of a guestworker program that simplifies administrative requirements and provides temporary legal status and protection for migrant farm workers (half of hired farm workers lack legal status to work in the U.S.)

The committee also acted on resolutions, including

- Reso to urge congress to pass legislation in support of the livestock, ranching, production agriculture, and other farming industries commensurate with an acknowledgement that agriculture is the bedrock of the United States economy and is essential to national security
- Reso to urge U.S. Department of Labor to reform existing policies and rules to expand farm workforce flexibility to ensure a reliable and capable workforce is available for U.S. farms and ranches

Takeaway: Similar to the conversation at NACo's February 2022 legislative conference, the subcommittee once again discussed the loss of productive farmland due to speculation and increased development. Honolulu, like other counties would benefit from federal funding to support agricultural communities, such as subsidies and grants, as well as policies that support access to healthy foods and resilient food supply, however there are also opportunities for us to seek similar funding and support at the state and county level. The agricultural grant that the City is implementing for county farmers is one way that the city is providing support to farmers, and we will continue to oversee the programs implementation and eventual expansion. Also relevant is provisions in Bill 10 to strengthen agricultural use of agricultural lands (minimum percentage dedication for parcels that allow non-agricultural uses), expanding agricultural opportunities and supporting existing and future agricultural lifestyles (e.g. farm dwellings).

### **Community, Economic and Workforce Development Policy Steering Committee: Subcommittees Meeting**

The subcommittee meeting included discussions with federal and industry partners to learn more about topics of interest to the committee, including in particular housing affordability, homelessness, economic development, job training and federal workforce development programs.

The panelists included Andy Karellas, Executive Director, State International Development Organizations, Mereb Hagos, Program Manager, Center for Regional Economic Competitiveness, Kathryn Starkey, Commissioner, Pasco County, Florida, Keith Cooke, Global Industry Manager – Community Development, ESRI, Hon. Stan VanderWerf, Commissioner, El Paso County, Colorado, Martha Schrader, Commissioner, Clackamas County, Oregon, Richard Cesar, Esq, Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, U.S. Department of Labor, and Jung Kim, Manager, Economic Development Advisory Services, Ernst & Young.

The latter end of the panel included the following recommendations: In order to have homes for all we need to reduce barriers like authorizing remote notarization, re-invest in high school and college courses that teach people how to build and repair things (e.g. shop class) and in trades, expedite processes for certain types of housing.

The subcommittee discussed a lot of resolutions, including

- A reso urging the permanent extension of New Markets Tax Credit to attract private development in low-income communities.
- Resos urging the expansion of the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program, continued funding of HUD programs (HOME, CDBG, Section 8, veterans affairs supportive housing vouchers, etc).
- A reso urging support for improved and efficient legal avenues for immigration to contribute to work force and local economies.
- A reso urging HUD's Office of Policy and Development and Research to look at impacts that institutional landlords have on homeownership, including in particular disproportionate impacts on communities of color, the elderly, lower and middle income households, etc.
- A reso urging federal government addresses discriminatory practice of landlords refusing to accept housing vouchers or rental subsidies.
- A reso supporting federal support to increase african american homeownership rates in the United States.

## **Exhibit Hall**

We walked through the exhibit hall and met numerous non-profits and government partners that provide services to government partners, including

- Pallet, a leader in shelter village solutions, which has partnered on projects in Waimānalo and Maui
- Granicus, which designs and manages government websites, including previously the City Council's website, and
- Multiple short-term rental compliance software companies including one with experience working with another Hawaii county and with a hawaii based staffer
- Willis Towers Watson, a benefits services company, who we will be trying to introduce to the State EUTF to assess whether the State and counties could benefit from their services
- SLS, who specializes in disaster and emergency response and emergency sheltering, and has set up emergency medical facilities in some of the U.S.' hardest hit communities during COVID. The company has experience in Hawaii and was recently contracted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to do emergency repairs in Honolulu and Kauai counties.
- Multiple hygiene trailer companies, which may be helpful contacts as the city continues to look at ways to expanded its homeless services
- Quickbase, a software and platform solutions company, that provides project management and training management platforms

We intend to share contacts with agency leads as appropriate.

## **Large Urban County Caucus Meeting**

The Large Urban County Caucus meeting featured conversations with national and local leaders on topics of importance to urban counties, including elections, gun violence prevention, and mental and behavioral health.

### *State and Local Solutions for Protecting Election Officials*

The panelists included Jack Sellers, LUCC Vice Chair, Board Chairman, Maricopa County, Arizona, Josh Zygielbaum, Clerk & Recorder, Adams County, Colorado, Elizabeth Howard, Senior Counsel, Brennan Center for Justice, and Wendy Underhill, Director of Elections and Redistricting, National Conference of State Legislatures spoke about challenges counties have in administering local elections, which includes overseeing polling places and coordinating poll workers for federal, state and local elections.

Goals of the panel included protecting election employees during the 2022 cycle, exchanging ideas and practices, including in particular safety measures that can be implemented across the country, and continuing conversation at NACo regularly.

County election officials have seen a significant uptick in harassment and safety concerns for officials since the 2020 election, which have had significant impact on employee retention, ability to attract employees and poll volunteers, increased employee retirement, and resignation of election administrators, which has created what some are describing as a crisis.

Josh Zygielbaum expressed the significant challenges that Adams County, Colorado has had, which included staff retention, death threats, and general fear amongst staff that they will be targets. In addition to allegations of elections being fake there are also allegations that the elections are fixed or pre-determined.

As a result, their county elections office has had to remodel their office, modify community access to the office, install bullet proof glass windows, and require their security to wear bullet proof vests and carry concealed weapons.

According to Elizabeth Howard, data shows that

- one in six election officials have been threatened
- 80% of election officials are women, and
- more than half of threats are not reported

She agreed that many officials are retiring, which is causing concerns for stable elections, and that overall election officials are by far the most trusted for information on elections by the general public. Her solutions included ensuring law enforcement has proper training, especially on election provisions because law enforcement may not be as familiar with these provisions because they are only applicable once every two years. She urged that the federal government needs to pitch in more funds.

As a part of her kuleana as the Director of Elections and Redistricting of the National Conference of State Legislators (NCSL) Wendy Underhill tracks all state legislation regarding elections. In 2021 the only significant measures that were passed across the country regarding election officials were to target or hold election officials accountable, there was no legislation to protect officials. Then in 2022, there were 20 bills introduced across the country to provide for the safety of election officials and workers and 5 were enacted, including in Colorado, New Hampshire, Maine, Oregon, and Massachusetts.

She also shared that misinformation and disinformation across the country is at an all time high, and that impacts to election staff include officials moving and challenges in attracting poll workers.

Takeaways: While Honolulu county does not appear to have the same level of concerns as other counties, we have seen an increase in community members alleging that elections are predetermined, and we may want to consider ensuring law enforcement is properly trained on election specific laws and consider election reform policies that proactively protect and support local election officials.

#### *Federal Resources for Addressing Gun Violence*

The Panelists Mark Poloncarz, County Executive, Erie County, New York and Mr. Luke McGowan, Senior Advisor, White House, discussed policy strategies for reducing and preventing gun violence.

Mr. Poloncarz started his speech by articulating that gun violence is a national emergency and sharing details about the recent tragedy in Buffalo, which is Erie County's capital. The gunman who killed 10 community members, was racially motivated, picked Buffalo because of its high population of african americans, and expressed online that his goal was to stop further great replacement of whites. His AR15 and body armor were all legally purchased. Mr. Poloncarz described that the Bipartisan Gun Safety Bill that congress passed in June 2022, was a good start, but that much more is needed to further regulate and/or ban assault weapons, which can damage the body so violently that it decapitated some of the victims in Buffalo, and to further regulate body armor which prevented bullets from stopping the gunman before he could kill more victims.

Mr. Luke McGowan, Senior Advisor in the White House described some of the key components of the Bipartisan Gun Safety bill, including

- Provides funding for crisis intervention programs to help keep guns out of the hands of those who pose a threat
- Closes boyfriend loophole in domestic violence law, which extends existing laws that bar individuals that have been convicted of domestic violence crimes against spouses from obtaining a gun, to include crimes against someone they have a serious relationship of a romantic or intimate nature with

- Requires more gun sellers to register as dealers
- Requires more thorough review of people ages 18 - 21 who want to buy guns
- Makes gun trafficking (buying for others) a federal crime
- Increases funding for mental health programs and school security

Mr. McGowan agreed that more was needed to keep our communities safer and shared more about President Biden's Safer America Plan, which includes

- Funding for additional police officers
- Funding for crime prevention - new resources to respond to mental health crisis, job training, housing (prevent crime and advance equity)
- Proposing congress pass legislation to require background checks for all gun sales and ban assault weapons and high-capacity magazines

Takeaway: Given that the U.S. Supreme Court recently overturned the State of Hawai'i's conceal and carry laws during a time when we are seeing an increase in violent crimes in Honolulu county, the potential for gun violence is more real today than ever before. We should be urging the Hawai'i delegation to support increased background checks for all gun sales, ban assault weapons and high-capacity magazines, and look into whether Honolulu county may be eligible for additional funding for police officers included in the Safer American Plan.

#### *Leveraging Policy to Modernize Behavioral Health Care in Urban Counties*

The panelists included Kathryn Barger, LUCV Vice Chair, Supervisor, Los Angeles County, California, Angela Conley, LUCV Vice Chair, Commissioner, Hennepin County, Minnesota, and Clay Jenkins, Judge, Dallas County, Texas.

The panelists discussed the growing mental health crises that many counties across the country are facing and how health care coverage for comprehensive mental health and substance abuse and housing programs are critical tools for counties to address these challenges. The councilmembers (supervisor and commissioner) shared their counties' innovative practices and strategies for delivering services in their counties, which included setting up a restorative care village, implementing a tax on high value properties to raise funds, creating an urgent care center to specifically treat this population, use of therapeutic vans which are offices of licensed clinicians on wheels, coordinating with mental health experts and law enforcement with a focus on de-escalation and diversion, increasing investment in housing first programs, and ensuring programs are culturally appropriate and accessible.

#### **Rural Action Caucus Meeting**

The Rural Action Caucus discussed issues and policies important to rural communities. The panelists discussed the need to ensure local priorities are addressed in the 2023 farm bill, access to banking to address disparate access to financing for rural small businesses and individuals, the need for high speed internet to address service gap for



rural residents, as well as how resources being made available in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law may be able to address some of these issues.

### **National Democratic County Officials Discussion**

The National Democratic County Officials organization, which is a strong supporter of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, hosted Ross Templeton, Political and Legislative Director at Ironworkers Political Action League, to discuss next steps on the Act.

After going over the basic priorities of the Act, namely funding for road, bridge, and major transportation projects; clean energy; led pipe replacement and upgrades to water and sewer lines to support clean drinking water; and expanding electric vehicle charging network; Ross gave an update on the related Biden Executive Orders, which is focused on

- Working, Organizing, and Empowerment
  - Created a task force
  - Issues directives to federal agencies
- Bill implementation - which issues directives for job quality (eg safety) and equity
- Project Labor Agreements
  - Assumed appropriate
  - Authorized, not required, for grant recipients

As a proponent for unions the speaker also noted that project labor agreements can provide

- Good value - increased safety, training, and fair wages and benefits. Also PLAs increase likelihood of meeting project delivery deadlines as a skilled workforce is less likely to have delays and negotiations over details like wages occur in advance.
- Flexibility - PLAs can be customized for each project.

Some things for counties to follow up on

- To access or ensure appropriate county consideration for state formula funds, ensure coordination with state appointed coordinators. Each state is supposed to appoint coordinators.
- Look at competitive discretionary grants and loans which counties apply directly for.

The group also discussed other issues consistent with the democratic platform, namely supporting women's reproductive rights. We discussed NACo's consideration of a resolution to support reproductive rights, to "urge[] Congress and the Administration to ensure women's reproductive rights and access to care for our resident's health, reducing disparities in maternal morbidity and mortality." NACo's Board of Directors and membership ultimately supported this policy at the conference and we were prepared to offer comments and support if objections were raised.

### Takeaways/Follow Ups:

- Look into whether we can make amendments to city ordinances (e.g. land use and zoning laws) to support community clinics that offer reproductive rights services.
- The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act can be significant for counties, including Honolulu, as we own and maintain a significant amount of roads, bridges, and other infrastructure, and manage the county's drinking water supply, and storm water infrastructure. Coordination between state and county governments can maximize benefits (e.g. fixing roads while also replacing pipes or laying broadband).
  - Examples of how the federal government has attempted to ensure coordination: The EPA has prioritized working with counties to inform distribution and the Federal Highways Administrator has suggested for counties having a hard time coordinating directly with the State should establish a relationship with the Hawaii Federal Highway Administrator.
  - We should reach out to federal contacts to determine who the infrastructure coordinators are for housing and wastewater and other infrastructure resources to make connections for the city and private affordable housing developers.
- The executive orders related to implementation of the Act provides directives regarding safety and promoting equity and level the playing field in unserved and underserved communities.

### Improving Economic Mobility for County Residents

Hosted by the NACo Economic Mobility Leadership Network, a cohort of county elected leaders focused on helping residents move up the economic ladder, this panel featured discussion of how counties can impact upward economic mobility of their constituents in the areas of housing, education and workforce development, health, community and neighborhood development, justice and public safety, technology and information access, and financial security. These examples were particularly valuable as Honolulu and other counties are looking at investing in the economic recovery of their counties and the long-term economic outcomes of their constituents.

The panelists included Keith Fudge, Senior Policy Program Manager, Research to Action Lab, Urban Institute, Hon. Eileen Higgins, Commissioner, Miami-Dade County, Florida, Billy Francis, Executive Director, Coconino County Workforce Development Board, Coconino County, Arizona, and Tim Shaw, Associate Director of Policy, Aspen Institute Financial Security Program.

Eileen Higgins focused on discussing the housing crisis across the U.S., and in particular Miami-Dade County, Florida, and the policies that the county has implemented to address the housing crisis, which also affects their residents ability to move up the economic ladder.

While rents are soaring across the country, cities in Florida have seen the largest spike in median rent. Miami-Dade County in particular, which is where Commissioner Higgins is from, is considered to be the hottest rental market in the nation due to high occupancy, low supply and record high lease renewal rates.

Miami-Dade, similar to Honolulu, is considered a low wage economy--while Miami-Dade saw a 20% increase in rent rates from 2019 to 2021, wage rates only increased five to six percent. Miami-Dade county also regularly experiences a large influx of newcomers seeking warmer weather, oftentimes with higher incomes, and most recently with the ability to work remotely. The county's commission united to prioritize adopting affordable housing policies to preserve existing affordable housing, build more affordable housing, and convert existing market rate housing into affordable housing. By the end of the year, Miami-Dade may have nearly 14,000 units of affordable housing in development. Some of the innovate policies they adopted include

- Layering incentives for private land and private developers (Florida state law prohibits mandating of inclusionary zoning), including
  - Density bonuses, with higher bonuses near transient areas,
  - Decosting by exempting or eliminating impact fees, waste water/sewer fees in exchange for affordability period (e.g. 20 years, at least 10-20% of units must be affordable),
  - Allowing affordable housing projects to go to front of line for permitting, and
  - Providing funding for workforce housing.
- Identifying and building on unproductive county lands
  - the county did a deep dive into looking at the existing uses of its county lands, identified 50 acres of wasted space (e.g. one story buildings, unproductive spaces, or properties that do not efficiently use space), and started redevelopment projects to build 800 to 2,500 more affordable units.
  - The commissioner estimates that for every public dollar, eight dollars of private funding is being used in these projects.

Other things they worked on include

- Trying to change the negative connotations their constituents have regarding affordable housing as concentration of poverty centers that they do not want in their areas, but focusing on mixed income projects that are aesthetically pleasing.
- Use of HUD's rental assistance development program, increased partnerships with habitat for humanity on infill projects and low density lots,
- Partnering with private developers on redevelopment housing projects, where the affordable housing components would be paid for by government and also allowing workforce units to be built within the same project which would be almost exclusively funded by the private sector

## Key Takeaways

- Honolulu county has a lot of similarities with Miami-Dade county, including being a low wage economy that attracts higher earning newcomers, and we have also seen very high rent increases over the last year, however their increases in rent and median home and condo sales are still much lower than Honolulu county.
- Honolulu has already implemented many of the policies that Commissioner Higgins discussed that Miami-Dade has adopted, including waiving and exempting projects from fees and providing density bonuses, however two policies she discussed are worth looking closer into:
  - Whether it would be good policy for Honolulu county to allow affordable housing projects to get priority for permitting and if so what would the minimum threshold be (e.g. # of units, affordability period, affordability AMI)
  - Whether Honolulu county should look at current inventory of lands to identify underutilized properties and plan for redevelopment.

## General Session

The General Session started with opening by NACo President Larry Johnson highlighting the year's accomplishments, including the following:

- For context - NACo advocates for policies that further the nation's 3,069 counties, parishes and boroughs, 2,590 of which or 84%, are NACO members.
- Due in large part to NACo's advocacy, counties have been able to receive and invest significant ARPA resources, positioning counties and residents to
- Secured additional aid for public lands counties in ARPA and full funding for the payments in lieu of taxes program, which will particularly assist with rural counties.
- Advocated with partners to support the passage of the Bipartisan Infrastructure bill - record investment in county owned trails, roads, sidewalks and bridges, as well as in broadband accessibility (NACo created bipartisan broadband plan is being used by federal government).
- Pushed congress and administration to addressing the Medicaid inmate exclusion policy to maintain access to federal benefits for those that may have been arrested but not yet convicted, which not only assists the individual and their 'ohana, but also the counties and/or states that would otherwise have to incur those costs.
- Launched the familiar faces initiatives to empower data sharing and care integration between health and justice systems to coordinate care options for those with complex behavior and mental health conditions.
- NACo had a 99.6% retention rate for membership.

The general session also highlighted work in Adams County, which has a goal of being the most innovative and inclusive county in america. In 2020, it experienced a 15% growth, and is a county with a majority minority population. With an approximate population of 560k, the 5 largest ethnic groups in Adams County, Colorado are White (Non-Hispanic) (48.9%), White (Hispanic) (30.5%), Other (Hispanic) (6.31%), Asian

(Non-Hispanic) (3.76%), and Black or African American (Non-Hispanic) (3.46%). Some of their innovate programs include:

- Homes for hope
- Stanley cup
- Murals for hope
- Hypersonic rocket facility
- Aerospace partnerships
- Participation in Major NACo projects/initiatives
  - Familiar Faces
  - Response to decline in coal industry
  - Military network partnership (TW - helicopter opportunity)

Dr. Rahul Gupta, Director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, spoke about the administration's national drug control strategy, and its four priorities:

- Naloxone availability - for every dollar spent on Naloxone, \$2700 in benefits are arguably received
- Scaling up treatment capacity - less than 10% of those that want treatment get it
- Timely actionable data to guide overdose response strategies
- Disrupting drug trafficking operations and profits

He specifically talked about the administration's focus on racial equity, as for far too long drug policy has disproportionately affected communities of color. In order to level the playing field, he articulated that in order to know if a disparity is occurring and to understand who needs treatment, we need to demand collection of and disaggregation of racial and ethnic data.

In furtherance of the discussion on racial equity, Heather McGhee, Author, Speaker and Advocate on inequality in America and its impacts on the American economy, she spoke about how racism has affected the financial crisis, rising student debt, and the country's collapsing infrastructure. Most interestingly she discussed how racism, is not only affecting people of color, but white people as well, and that it is the common denominator of America's most vexing public problems.

Her speech and book focuses on two key concepts:

- Zero-sum paradigm: the idea that progress for some of us must come at the expense of others.
- Solidarity Dividend: gains that come when people come together, to accomplish what we simply can't do on our own.

Key Insights from her Speech:

- Collective economic process is being held back by a lie, the zero sum paradigm. The concept being that there is a fixed pie of well-being and that progress for some must come at the expense of others.
  - Zero sum model is counter to economic approaches: everyone can thrive
  - Black white economic divide has cost america \$16 or trillion. Everyone and white economic divide costs america \$70 trillion.

- Zero sum - racialized: If we expand racial equity, it will come at the expense of white people.
- White people are more likely to buy into zero sum philosophy
- Racially exclusionary government policies and investments helped build America's middle class:
  - The 1930s-40s saw America's New Deal era of public goods, where the government invested substantially in roads, parks, villages, pools, libraries, etc., which was a result of an ethos at the time that the government has kuleana to ensure decent well being of people.
  - Other investments were also made in housing, social security, government regulated financial loans, GI bill (free college, no down payment), etc., which led to the greatest middle class the world had ever seen.
  - However, many of these and future policies were explicitly or implicitly racist. E.g. Federal housing policies were explicitly racist, social security benefits excluded agricultural and domestic work (jobs where black people were highly represented), and policies for accessing GI benefits adversely impacted black soldiers. The result was deep and wide disparities between white and black people. Additionally, as college students increased in color, funding for state colleges reduced, which exacerbated existing disparities and fueled black - white wealth politics.

She also spoke about solidarity dividend, or gains that come when people come together, to accomplish what we simply can't do on our own. She spoke about this concept through a story that took place in Maine. In Maine, people use the term "from away" to describe people that have not been in Maine for generations (immigrants or families that have only been in Maine for a couple generations). One of the "older" from away groups in Maine, are french canadians, who stopped speaking french after immigrating to Maine to assimilate to the community. And the newest from away group, are somali immigrants, many of whom became small business owners and most of whom still speak french. She spoke of a story where somali french speaking individuals joined a town french club, and these somali immigrants retaught descendants of french canadians to speak french. These unlikely allies also used their relationship to organize and unite politically and successfully helped to override a governor veto on medicaid expansion, which would have adversely affected both populations.

### **County Opioid Litigation Wins and Planning for What's Next**

The opioid crisis has been described as one of the worst public health emergencies in the United States' history. In the 1990s pharmaceutical companies alleged that opioids were not highly addictive leading to increased prescriptions by medical providers. In 2017 the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services declared the opioid epidemic a public health emergency. Over 90,000 people died of an overdose in 2020 alone, with approximately 75% of those deaths involving opioids. The crisis is taking a toll on our families and society, including in Hawaii.

Earlier this year Johnson & Johnson (a manufacturer of opioids) and AmerisourceBergen, Cardinal Health, and McKesson (three distributors of opioids) finalized multi-litigant settlements over their roles in the opioid crisis. Due to participation of counties and local governments, the \$26 billion award was nearly twice as much as the base payout would have been. The panel provided an overview of the various opioid litigation, the settlement, the appropriate uses of the funds, successful efforts of two governments in using their funds to address their communities' crises, and established principles to help governments decide how to spend the funds to address the crisis and NACo resources.

The panelists included Shayna E. Sacks, Partner, Napoli Shkolnik PLLC, Lesley Dahlkemper, Commissioner, Jefferson County, Colorado, Johnnie Carswell, Commissioner, Burke County, North Carolina, Sara Whaley, Research Associate, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and Program Manager, Bloomberg Overdose Prevention Initiative, and Ashleigh Holand, Director, Counties Futures Lab.

Shayna E. Sacks, a lawyer, partner and litigator at the Law Firm Napoli Shkolnik PLLC, which represents 200 government entities in state and federal lawsuits against opioid manufacturers, distributors, and pharmacies, 150 of which are counties, started the panel with an overview of the various litigation. Lawsuits have been filed in both state and federal courts. All lawsuits the firm engaged in were coordinated to save money (on fees, evidence, witnesses, etc), ensure consistent rulings, and to use earlier trial decisions to inform settlements of other cases. Thousands of cases have been filed and of the cases that have gone to trial, all but one (in West Virginia) were found in favor of plaintiffs. Many decisions are in the appeals process.

Nearly all states (46) and local governments were a part of litigation and ultimately settlement against Johnson & Johnson and McKesson, Cardinal Health and AmerisourceBergen. The settlement resolves Johnson & Johnson and the "big three" distributors' liabilities in over 3,000 lawsuits across the country.

Settlement was about \$26 billion, with approximately \$20 billion from distributors, and the rest from Johnson & Johnson.

Ms. Saks shared that national litigation will continue against the remaining defendants that have not settled, as many as 70 defendants have been named in various cases. The \$26 billion settlement is only related to a filing against four defendants, however these defendants probably have the largest pockets of the manufacturers and distributors and therefore this settlement may represent a significant portion of what will likely be received by governments. Litigation against pharmacies like Walgreens may also result in substantial damages, however pharmacies appear to be fighting more and settling less. It is anticipated that five federal court trials will start soon against pharmacies.

With regards to the \$26 billion settlement, funding will be distributed over 10 to 18 years based on allocation agreements and calculations. All states will receive at least three

distributions before the end of 2022. The majority of the settlement has to be spent on approved uses, which are designed to be broad to allow governments to tailor their strategies based on their needs, but must be focused on abatement.

Lesley Dahlkemper of Jefferson County, Colorado, and Johnnie Carswell of Burke County, North Carolina, shared the approaches of their respective counties. Both of their states have decided to take a regional approach to their opioid response strategies. Regional councils or consortiums, composed of public health officials, human service officials, members of the judiciary, law enforcement, etc, were set up in each state and members of the consortiums will determine how to best allocate. They have already created implementation plans.

In Colorado, which is leading the nation on planning and implementing its opioid response strategies with the settlement funds is allocating 90% to local governments, some funding is being allocated for infrastructure (e.g. facilities), and they are allowing smaller counties to contribute their allocation to the regional council and use other counties' facilities and programs.

In North Carolina each county is also creating their own plans and prioritizing coordination to reduce duplication. After hearing from key stakeholders like faith based organizations, law enforcement, health care workers, health and human services workers, etc, Burke County is focusing their funds on rehabilitation for opioid addiction as well as addition to other highly addictive drugs like fentanyl. They are taking an old jail facility and using \$3.25 million to convert it into a recovery program. Unlike other facilities, the program will not have a maximum time for participation, they are going to let patients stay as long as it takes. Since the county is only receiving \$13 million, they know that they will need to leverage their funds to attract other funding, and they know they will need to coordinate with other counties (there are 100 counties in the state). They are also prioritizing implementation of community paramedicine and drug court.

Sara Whaley discussed the Bloomberg Overdose Prevention Initiative, which has been funded by the Bloomberg Philanthropies for a total of \$170 million over eight years to reduce overdose deaths in the United States. In addition to providing funding for states hardest hit with overdose deaths, they also promote evidence-based policies and support implementation of best practices to reverse the upward trend of overdose deaths.

With regards to the opioid settlements they have been providing technical assistance and research and evaluation support. Their overall recommendation has been for government entities to ensure funding is spent on addressing the crisis, versus for general public needs, which was the situation with the tobacco settlement (the tobacco settlement was ten times higher, but states have only used approximately three percent for abatement). The initiative assisted with curating the following five principles for use of the funds to address the crisis:

- Spend money to save lives
- Use evidence to guide spending



- Invest in youth prevention (resiliency strategy)
- Focus on racial equity (focus on disproportionately impacted)
- Create fair and transparent process (inc in particular those with lived experiences)

So far the principles have been endorsed by 60 organizations, including harm reduction, drug treatment, and addiction organizations.

They have also noted the following as indicators that a government is ready to receive the funds, including

- Policies and process to ensure funds are spent to address substance abuse (e.g. dedicated fund set up, policies to require funding must be spent on addressing substance abuse)
- Policies in place to establish an effective process (e.g. agreements for regional collaboration, requirements for evidence based practices)
- Commitment to Transparency (e.g. evaluation and review of plans)

Takeaways:

- The opioid settlement is a great example of the power of the counties. When deciding to settle with the States, the defendants provided huge incentives for state and county coordination -- to unlock the full amount of the settlement, the state plaintiffs had to convince the counties to join the settlement. Therefore counties were hugely influential in getting settlements finalized and increasing funding availability for their communities.
- Although prevalence of opioid related death rates in Hawaii are low compared to national data, overdose deaths in Hawaii outpace traffic fatalities, and Hawaii's high rates of drug related incarcerations suggests that opioid impacts could grow in Hawaii if not mitigated. The settlement provides an opportunity for Hawaii to invest in strategies to mitigate impacts of the crisis, including preventing death and increased incarceration.
- All Hawaii counties agreed to the settlement and Hawaii is expected to get nearly \$78 million, and we want to ensure that most of that funding will go directly to addressing the ongoing opioid crisis and mitigate further impacts, including through supporting treatment, recovery, and harm reduction.
- Given that funding is anticipated to start coming into the State of Hawaii before the end of the year and then over the next 10 - 18 years it behooves the state and counties to work together to strategically determine the best way to ensure the funding is used most effectively and efficiently.
- There may be a need to overcome the stigma of drug treatment as many may object to treatment centers in their communities.

### **Federal Policy Lightning Round Update: Outlook on the 118th Congress**

NACo staff held a lightning round, very quick paced, discussion on things to watch in the 118th congress

- Reauthorization of Farm bill, current authorization expires 2023

- Admin will be hosting listening sessions across the state
- Focus on climate related issues (climate smart commodities practices)
- Focus on equity toward underserved populations
- Focus on water and wastewater (ensure all residents have access to clean water)
- Farm bill has discretionary and mandatory funding
- County feedback is key
- Senate will play key role in determining ultimate funding
- S3580-ocean shipping act passed to get critical goods to our communities
- Health: On July 16- 9-8-8 was turned on - authorized by national suicide hotline act of 2022
  - Elements: 1) someone to call 24/7, 2) someone to respond (mobile crisis teams), 3) somewhere to go (crisis stabilization facilities)
  - Should provide behavioral health care in the least restrictive way
  - Additional congressional support needed to ensure proper staffing
  - NACo passed resolution, supporting universal standards, access for all, funding for services, behavioral health coordination offices, need for CIP funding for facilities
- Environment energy and land use
  - PFAS - class of toxic chemicals used in commercial, industrial, and emergency issues, forever chemicals, associated with cancer, reproductive problems, etc.
  - EPA trying to make it hazardous under CRCLA, requires reporting and payment for spills and cleanups
  - Because they are everywhere, they end up in our water
  - NACo arguing that counties should be exempt as counties have not necessarily played a role in the presence of PFAs. EPA said they won't hold counties responsible, but NACo staff urging that it should be clarified to mitigate counties liability.
  - Bipartisan infrastructure bill appropriated \$55 billion to EPA and \$10 billion specifically for PFAS
  - Each state must submit intended use plan, so far only four states have submitted
- Community economic and workforce
  - China competitiveness bill (CHIPS+)
  - Passed Senate, currently in the House
  - Large scale investment in US ability to compete economically with China
    - Strengthening supply chain resiliency
    - Supporting opportunity and innovation
  - Regional technology and innovation hubs across the nation (\$10 billion in senate bill in 20 spots) new Silicon Valley's across the country
  - 3 hubs in each of 6 geographic areas
  - \$52 billion for semi conductor
  - New semi conductor tax credit
  - Regional tech hubs got \$10 billion
- Justice and public safety

- Cannabis bill secure and fair enforcement hr1996 - provides banking services for cannabis related legitimate businesses
- Has passed the house 7 times
- National flood insurance program - looking to get long term extension (currently on its 17th short term reauthorization)
- Secure rural schools got a 3 year reauthorization in infrastructure bill, important changes for next round: now eligible to make allocations under 3 portions (in foreign services website end of fiscal year is deadline to submit)

## **Practical Policy Solutions to Promote Affordable Housing**

As housing and rental prices continue to increase across the country, significantly outpacing wage growth, solutions to increase access to and supply of affordable housing is increasingly important. All across the country sufficient housing has not been built since the great recession and the U.S. Housing and Urban Development projects that the housing supply deficit is worsening, 3.8 million deficit in 2022 from 2.5 million in 2018. The panel discussed public policy tools and solutions based on local conditions that counties can implement to address the specific situations in their communities.

The panel included Tim Shaw, Associate Director of Policy, Aspen Institute Financial Security Program, and Jenny Schuetz, Senior Fellow, Brookings Institute.

The panel started with a discussion on NACo' housing solutions matchmaker tool, which is meant to be a resource for local officials, that provides information to assist with understanding key elements of local housing markets, identifying key challenges, and providing resources on policies to help enhance local housing market.

The tool provides local governments with a snapshot of the housing conditions of their counties, focusing on key metrics--how expensive housing is and whether population is growing (e.g. Hawaii = growing population, high cost), and places locality in context relative to neighboring communities.

- Intended uses: supply and affordability recommendations
- Not meant to provide a picture of homelessness or recommend policies to address homelessness
- Thus far, recommendations focus on metro counties

County explorer website:

<https://www.naco.org/resources/housing-solutions-matchmaker-tool>

Honolulu County

<https://ce.naco.org/%2Fapp%2Fprofiles%2FHSM%2FHSM%2015003.pdf>

Dr. Jenny Scheuetz, an expert in urban economics and housing policy noted that housing is not just a supply issue, its really a supply and affordability issue. The U.S. has a short fall of approximately 3.8 million homes. Some states have decades of underbuilding and are extremely expensive housing. But she pointed out that housing

affordability is an issue everywhere. Households earning the least (20 to 25% of population) cannot afford a home in any state.

- No matter what, wages haven't kept up with inflation so they can't afford it
- Currently, no county has successfully addressed how to ensure the most severely cost burdened are housing stable
- This is a federal problem and the federal government should allocate funding and support related policies

Strategies for counties with less resources?

- Counties that need additional financial resources (counties that are small)-- should partners with other neighboring counties
- Smaller communities get their funding through states--make sure you talk to your state housing department and explain your needs
- Vacancy rates = higher cost of maintenance of infrastructure

When discussing policies to address vacancies, such as higher taxes for vacant homes, the panel was unaware of obviously successful policies to address high vacancies. For communities that have a lot of second homes, may want to look at bringing more homes online for long term residents by having fewer second homes. However, in terms of taxing, when looking at places like Vancouver that have higher property tax rates for foreign owners and vacant homes, it can be expensive to track/monitor, and places that have implemented vacancy policies have seen only slight successes in terms of affecting supply.

Takeaways:

- Home value-to-income ratios between 2.5-3.5 are considered healthy. The typical household in Hawaii's metro counties would have to pay 7.9 times their annual income to purchase the median home in Honolulu County.
- Households earning less than \$69,800 (or 82 percent of the metro area median income) would have difficulty paying rent for the median rental home in Honolulu County, while spending no more than 30% of their income on rent. While middle-income households in Hawaii's metro counties can afford median rent in Honolulu County, low- and moderate-income households in the region will fall below this threshold.
- 25.6 percent of renters in Honolulu County are severely cost-burdened, meaning they spend more than half their income on rent. That is above the severely cost-burdened share for all metro counties in the state combined as well as above the national average.
- The tool suggests that Honolulu county's vacancy rate (adjusted for seasonal vacancies) of 6.4 percent, may be healthy (as in general vacancy rates of six to ten percent are considered healthy), however Hawai'i extremely high median home cost.
- The panel said recommendations they would make for all counties would be to expand vouchers or income supports for low-income renters because in every community, lower income households will not be able to afford housing without financial assistance.

City Council  
City and County of Honolulu

# CLAIM FOR TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT

Date: 08/01/2022

Traveler: Esther Kia'aina


Event: NACo 2022 Annual Conference & Exposition

Location: Adams County, Colorado

Dates: From July 21, 2022 To July 24, 2022

Description	Amount	Notes:
1. Registration Fee		
2. Airfare		
3. Hotel	1106.68	
4. Meals		
5. Ground Transportation		
6. Tips		
7. Other		
Other		
Other		
8. Adjustment		
TOTAL REIMBURSEMENT	1106.68	

This is to certify that the above data, based upon receipts submitted to Council Administrative Support Services via a CCLTRVL02 form, is accurate. Further, I am claiming reimbursement for expenses associated with a trip in which City business was conducted and personal funds were used to advance payment:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Traveler

8-2-22  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date