

# Resolution

No. 22-233

## REITERATING SUPPORT FOR THE VITAL ROLE OF THE FREE PRESS AND THE RIGHTS ON MAUI COUNTY WORKERS EMPLOYED AT THE LOCAL DAILY NEWSPAPER

WHEREAS, democracy depends on the free press to promote the open exchange of ideas, promote debate and critical reflection, question authority, remember history and the stories and communities, and to seek, discover, analyze, and share information that affects residents' lives and well-being; and

WHEREAS, the need for local journalism remains as important as ever; and

WHEREAS, with the evolution of technology, consolidation of media outlets, and increased use of freelance agents, many members of the press, particularly in print media, have recently experienced unstable working conditions and uncertain futures; and

WHEREAS, print journalists, such as writers and editors, and other newspaper staff are workers, with rights to reasonable pay, benefits, hours, job security, and to declare and investigate grievances; and

WHEREAS, the free press as a vital institution cannot exist without the people who provide the news; and

WHEREAS, members of the Pacific Media Workers Guild (The NewsGuild – Communications Workers of America Local 39521) who work at the only daily newspaper based in Maui County have been working under an expired contract since 2020; and

WHEREAS, employees of *The Maui News*, established in 1900, have been met with troubling demands from the corporation that owns the newspaper; and

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WHEREAS, West Virginia-based Ogden newspapers Inc. has hired out-of-state attorneys who have refused to answer questions about changes that would lead to significant upheaval at the newspaper relied on by Maui, Molokaʻi, and Lānaʻi residents for daily local news; and

WHEREAS, for instance, the company is seeking the sweeping ability to outsource newsroom, advertising and circulation work to independent contractors and to Mainland workers; and

WHEREAS, outsourcing of this work would likely lead to inaccuracies and cultural insensitivity in coverage and would be unfair to workers based in Maui County; and

WHEREAS, Ogden Newspapers, Inc. also seeks to make concerning cuts to working hours, pay, and severance; and

WHEREAS, the Pacific Media Workers Guild in September filed an unfair labor practice with the National Labor Relations Board after company representatives left the table after refusing to have members observe proceedings that would affect their livelihoods; and

WHEREAS, on September 11, 2020, the Maui County Council unanimously adopted Resolution 20-121 supporting the vital role of the free press and employees at *The Maui News*; and

WHEREAS, it has been over two years since the adoption of Resolution 20-121, yet labor negotiations between the Pacific Media Workers Guild and Ogden Newspapers, Inc. remain unsettled, causing immeasurable stress on workers' mental and emotional well-being; and

WHEREAS, the strength of the free press and the rights of newspaper workers in Maui County are imperiled; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the County of Maui:

1. That it continues to support the vital role of the free press in Maui County; and
2. That it supports the rights of Maui County workers employed at the only local daily newspaper; and

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3. That it demands Ogden Newspaper Inc. representatives bargain in good faith with workers to secure a strong, fair contract; and
4. That certified copies of this Resolution be transmitted to Ogden Newspapers, Inc.; Chris Minford, Publisher, *The Maui News*; Colleen Uechi, Managing Editor, *The Maui News*; Michael Applegate, Executive Office, Pacific Media Workers Guild; Kaitlin Gillespie, Hawaii Units Support Staff, Pacific Media Workers Guild; Wendy Isbell, Bargaining Unit Chair, Pacific Media Workers Guild; the Honorable Brian E. Schatz, United States Senator; the Honorable Mazie K. Hirono, United States Senator; the Honorable Kaiiali'i Kahele, United States Representative; the Honorable Ed Case, United States Representative; the Honorable David Y. Ige, Governor, State of Hawaii; and the Honorable Michael P. Victorino, Mayor, County of Maui.

INTRODUCED BY:

*Yuki Lei Sugimura*  
YUKI LEI K. SUGIMURA