



STATE REPRESENTATIVE BERTRAND KOBAYASHI

DISTRICT 19 - DIAMOND HEAD,
KAHALA, KAIMUKI, KAPAHULU



May 2022

Aloha Friends and Neighbors,

I hope this newsletter finds you and your loved ones safe and healthy. After being closed for COVID-19 since March 19, 2020, the State Capitol successfully re-opened to the public on March 7, 2022. We continue to navigate these unprecedented times cautiously.

The 2022 State Legislature concluded on May 5, 2022 with the successful passage of over 300 measures addressing important issues such as public health, environmental protection, a sustainable reopening of our economy and others. It is my pleasure to share with you a summary of some key bills that the Legislature passed. For additional details about this all too short summary of the 2022 legislature, please contact me.

Many of you have contacted me and my staff this past year. Please continue to share your thoughts with me about any issues of concern to you. If I can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me at: repkobayashi@capitol.hawaii.gov or (808) 586-6310.

I appreciate the honor of serving you in the House of Representatives. Stay safe and continue to remain vigilant.

With warmest aloha,

Bert Kobayashi
State Representative
District 19-Diamond Head, Kahala, Kaimuki, Kapahulu



Kaimuki YMCA Y's Men 100th Year Anniversary

The Y's Men's International (YMI) is celebrating 100 years of Partnership with the YMCA in 2022. Bert, a former Kaimuki YMCA Board member, owes much to the YMCA for high school, UH, and recent exercise and community activities.

Representative Kobayashi presenting a certificate from the Hawaii State House of Representatives honoring the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Y's Men International



Rep. Bert Kobayashi congratulates Rep. Nadine Nakamura, Chair of the Housing Committee for a very successful 2022 Legislative session

2022 Housing Fund Highlights

Housing funding got its **biggest ever** funding of over \$1 billion in 2022, including:

- *\$600 million for Hawaiian Home Lands
- *\$300 million for affordable rental housing, half for those with incomes below median
- *\$19 million in federal funds matched by \$4 million in State funds of needy families with up to \$500/month in rental assistance. A first time use of previously unused federal funds.
- *\$20 million for infrastructure for affordable housing
- *\$328 million to settle a 23-year old claim for those on the Hawaiian Homes waiting list prior to 1988.
- *\$1.5 million for incentives for landlords to participate in housing voucher programs and to cover property damages that exceed tenant's security deposit.



Car Driver Bills



- Driver licenses for those age 72 to 80 will expire after 4 years, not after the current 2 years.
- Fines for using mobile electronic devices while driving will increase from \$250 to \$300, except in school and construction areas where the fine will increase to \$400.
- 2020 photo red-light detection law was clarified, so please be careful about 'running' a traffic red light at intersections.
- Increased penalties for negligent homicide caused by drunk drivers with prior convictions.
- 4 bills passed with increased penalties for abandoning vehicles.

Prison Reform

Prison reform had perhaps its biggest year in many years. Bail reform was passed to eliminate monetary pre-trial bail for lesser, non-violent crimes. Hundreds awaiting trial are now imprisoned at the cost of \$200 per day because they cannot pay less than \$250 for bail. \$15 million to plan a new Oahu jail with an estimated \$1 billion cost was deleted, in keeping with Bert's bill to re-assess this costly project. Six bills of the Women's Prison Project were passed, a gigantic accomplishment.



Bert with House and Senate Corrections [prison] chairs, Rep. Ohno and Senator Nishihara. This was Bert's first term on Corrections committee.



Education had large budget increases: \$120 million teacher salary 'compression' changes and for professional development. Salary compression in Hawaii involves 8700 senior teachers being 'stuck' at the same salary for years. \$35 million for hard to fill teachers in special education, rural areas, and Hawaiian studies. \$2 million for menstrual products in response to an unusual student-activated request to prevent school absenteeism of female students. \$100 million for DOE positions restricted during the covid years.



Below are a listing of a few of the significant bills passed in this year's legislation:

MINIMUM WAGE passed, largely based on the House version. The current minimum wage of \$10.10/hour will increase to \$18/hour by 2028 incrementally. The current tip credit of \$.75 will increase to \$1.50/hour by 2028 incrementally.

EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT/EITC passed, making this credit refundable and permanent. The federal EITC is currently refundable and permanent. "Refundable" means that the credit will be received by everyone regardless of owing taxes or not.

HAWAIIAN money items were the biggest in history:

- \$600 million for Hawaiian Home Lands for housing and in-lieu cash substitutes.
- \$328 million to settle a 23-year old claim affecting 2700 people on the housing waiting list prior to 1988. Families of those who have passed away will receive payments.
- A \$6 million/yearly increase in public land trust payments to Office of Hawaiian Affairs, plus release of \$64 million of land trust payments now held in a special fund.
- \$10 million for Hawaiian homestead services.
- \$20 million for homestead lot development.

BAN 'FOREVER' PFAS CHEMICALS by 2024. PFAS or perfluoroalkyl chemicals are often used in food packaging [wraps, liners, plates, pizza boxes, etc.] and in firefighting foam, and persist for a very long time because they do not naturally break down. PFAS are linked to a variety of health problems.

HOMELESS: Extension of the Ohana Zones homeless transition housing program with an additional \$15 million. 3 years ago the Legislature pushed Ohana Zones, and after success, the administration reversed course and supported an extension. Also, approximately 100% increase in homeless hauling and storage funds, which will allow for more homeless sweeps. Creating an office for homelessness and housing solutions to provide stability and coordination.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES received \$3 million to convert its 40-year old barcode system to RFID/radio frequency identification to increase efficiency for both staff and the public.

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII received funding to produce more physicians [\$1.6 m.], more nurses [\$1.7 m.], and more teachers [\$557,000].

NEW STADIUM at Halawa - \$350 million for a mid-size stadium, smaller than today. A new organization structure to build affordable housing on the current stadium parking area was approved.

ADULT DENTAL SERVICES - \$26 million for MedQuest/Medicaid patients. These services were cut and not restored since the 2008 recession.

STATE HEALTH LABORATORY modernization - \$14 million to enable testing of drinking water in Hawaii; currently, some water samples go to the mainland for testing. The expectation is that the State will be reimbursed by the U.S. Navy.

REBATE of \$300 per person with incomes of less than \$100,000, \$100 per person to others.

CHILD WELFARE SERVICES FOR FOSTER CHILDREN will be greatly improved with \$8 million for expanded pre- and post-guardianship investigations, more home visits, better information systems, increased compensation to fill vacancies and retain current employees, and various support services. Credit goes to Rep. Lisa Marten of Kailua/Waimanalo, where a preventable foster child tragedy recently occurred.

INCREASE PENALTIES FOR FIREWORKS VIOLATIONS with maximum fines increased from \$2,000 to \$5,000, including for homeowner liability, effective July 1, 2022 [before 4th of July].



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MONEY, MONEY, MONEY -Best and Worst

Hawaii is seeing the best of times and the worst of times, to paraphrase famous author Charles Dickens.

Best: A record high carry-over balance for fiscal year ending June 2022 is expected, in part from 2 years of Covid cuts, bigger than expected tourism spending, plus \$21 billion in federal stimulus to Hawaii in 2020 and 2021.

Worst: Hawaii is still recovering from Covid, which persists and exposed our state's and nation's great income inequality, along with higher energy costs, supply chain problems, and inflation.

The biggest funding items this year are all one-time expenses, including: \$600m for Hawaiian Homes Lands, \$500m for rainy day fund, \$328m for pre-1988 claims for wait-listed Hawaiian homes, \$300m for rental housing, \$300m for pension, \$300m for health fund payments, \$250m for tax rebates, \$200m for early learning facilities, and \$200m for computer broadband infrastructure.



CHAIR
SYLVIA LUKE

Bert has served 10 years on House Finance Committee, chaired by Rep. Sylvia Luke from Nuuanu. As such, money and the budget has been Bert's primary focus.



HAWAII'S FUTURE, book by Gov. Ariyoshi

Governor George Ariyoshi's latest book, HAWAII'S FUTURE, discusses past and on-going efforts to manage growth and shape Hawaii's future.

Excerpts from HAWAII'S FUTURE:

--"Our resources are limited. Our environment is fragile. Our land is more crowded. The planet is warming, and the sea is rising."

--"We need new energy, better venues of communication, and a renewed agreement on how to proceed."

Bert, formerly Executive Secretary of the Governor's [Ariyoshi] Commission on Population and the Hawaiian Future, provided legislators with information and insight into recent discussions of quality growth, tourism promotion, and growth management.