



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
The Honorable Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
The Honorable Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair

**H.B. NO. 2655 MAKING APPROPRIATIONS FOR PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT COST
ITEMS.**

Hearing: Tuesday, February 27, 2024, 10:00 a.m.

The Office of the Auditor **supports** H.B. No. 2655, which is intended to appropriate funds to certain legislative agencies, including the Office of the Auditor, to fund Hawai'i employer-union health benefits trust fund costs and other cost adjustments authorized by Chapter 89C, Hawai'i Revised Statutes, for employees of the Legislative Branch excluded from collective bargaining.

We support providing our staff, none of whom are members of collective bargaining units, the same benefits, including salary adjustments, as those employees included in collective bargaining.

We have submitted detailed budget information in our testimony in support of H.B. No. 2520, the appropriations bill for the legislative branch. Testimony previously submitted to the Committee on Finance on H.B. No. 2520 is available here:
https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/sessions/session2024/Testimony/HB2520_TESTIMONY_FIN_02-06-24_.PDF (beginning on page 38).

Thank you for considering our testimony related to H.B. No. 2655.



Robin K. Matsunaga
Ombudsman

Yvonne M.F. Jinbo
First Assistant

**OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN
STATE OF HAWAII**

465 South King Street, 4th Floor
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
Tel: 808-587-0770 Fax: 808-587-0773 TTY: 808-587-0774
complaints@ombudsman.hawaii.gov

**TESTIMONY OF ROBIN K. MATSUNAGA, OMBUDSMAN,
ON H.B. NO. 2655, A BILL FOR AN ACT
MAKING APPROPRIATIONS FOR PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT COST ITEMS**

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

FEBRUARY 27, 2024

Chair Yamashita and Members of the Committee on Finance:

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in support of H.B. No. 2655. The purpose of this bill is to provide appropriations for public employment cost items and cost adjustments for employees of the legislative branch.

Your support and passage of this bill will allow it to serve as a vehicle during this session in the event appropriations are provided for public employment cost items and cost adjustments for employees of the executive and judicial branches.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony and for your support.



HAWAI'I STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

State of Hawai'i · Bishop Square, 1001 Bishop Street, ASB Tower 970 · Honolulu, Hawai'i

Committee: House Committee on Finance
Bill Number: HB 2655
Hearing Date/Time: February 27, 2024, 10:00 a.m.
Re: Testimony of the Hawai'i State Ethics Commission in **SUPPORT** of HB 2655, Making Appropriations for Public Employment Cost Items

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Committee Members:

The Hawai'i State Ethics Commission ("Commission") **supports** HB 2655, which makes appropriations for public employment cost items and cost adjustments for legislative employees (including employees of the Commission).

The Commission's mission is to preserve public confidence in government by promoting high ethical standards among public servants. The Commission administers the State Ethics Code and Lobbyist Law (Haw. Rev. Stat. chapters 84 and 97). For purposes of the ethics code, the Commission has jurisdiction over approximately 60,000 state officials and employees. Under the lobbyist law, the Commission has jurisdiction over nearly 500 lobbyists representing more than 400 organizations that lobby the state legislature or executive branch.

In 2023, the Commission's modest staff of 12 employees responded to 1,179 requests for advice from state legislators, state employees, lobbyists, members of the public, and candidates for state elected office. Moreover, Commission staff successfully engaged 35,977 participants in a mandatory ethics training course and addressed 329 complaints related to violations of the ethics code and lobbyist law. In essence, the Commission effectively fulfills its Constitutional mandate, largely owing to the dedication and commitment of its staff.

Consequently, the Commission strongly supports ensuring its employees are adequately compensated, particularly when compared to similarly situated employees.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony on House Bill 2655.

Very truly yours,

/S/ Robert D. Harris
Robert D. Harris
Executive Director and General Counsel