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GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

JADE T. BUTAY
DIRECTOR

WILLIAM G. KUNSTMAN
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

DEPT. COMM. NO. 279

STATE OF HAWAI'I
*KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I*
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
*KA 'OIHANA PONO LIMAHANA*

January 6, 2026

The Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi
President and Members of the Senate
Thirty-Third State Legislature
State Capitol, Room 409
Honolulu, HI 96813

The Honorable Nadine K. Nakamura
Speaker and Members House of
Representatives
Thirty-Third State Legislature
State Capitol, Rm 431
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear President Kouchi, Speaker Nakamura, and Members of the Legislature:

For your information and consideration, I am transmitting copies of the State-Funded Work Experience and Internship Programs Annual Report as required by Act 251, Session Laws of Hawaii 2025.

In accordance with section 93-16, Hawaii Revised Statutes, I am also informing you that the report may be viewed electronically at http://labor.hawaii.gov/find-a-report/.

Sincerely,

JADE T. BUTAY
Director of Labor and Industrial Relations

Enclosure

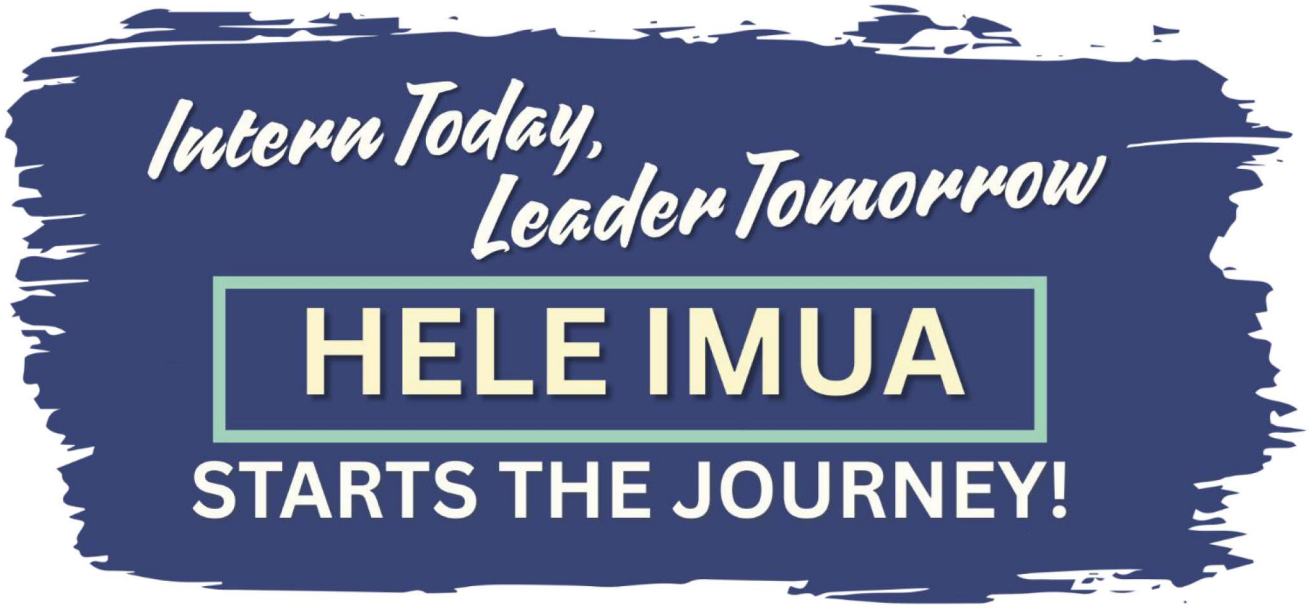
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# ACT 251 REPORT

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS



This report is in accordance with Act 251, Session Laws of Hawai'i (SLH) 2025. The Act requires the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR) to provide an annual report on state-funded internship programs across both the private and public sectors. Each report should include:

1) Outcomes and successes of the program,
2) The number of interns who enrolled in the program and exited the program during the previous fiscal year,
3) The names of the private or public sector organizations where intern placements were made,
4) Data on intern performance and retention rates,
5) Costs associated with the program; and
6) Any proposed legislation.

The Hele Imua Internship Program creates a pipeline to fill vacancies in State and County governments, gives interns valuable on-the-job experience, prepares them for high-demand careers, and helps students and recent graduates build relationships with potential employers. The Legislature believes that a similar program, connecting students and recent graduates with private-sector employers who agree to share program costs, will help address the projected shortage of workers in the State's building and construction industry.

To promote economic growth, foster public-private collaborations, and support job creation, the Legislature enacted Act 251, SLH 2025, which codifies the pre-existing public sector internship program and authorized expansion into the private sector. The Act:

1) Authorizes the DLIR to administer a state-funded on-the-job training and work experience program for eligible interns in partnership with private entities through a cost-sharing strategy. The program expands summer internship opportunities for high school students and offers internships for college and university students.
2) Codifies a state-funded internship program within the DLIR, in collaboration with Department of Human Resources Development (DHRD), to place interns in state executive branch departments, agencies, and programs. The program provides practical work experience and fosters interest in public service careers; and
3) Appropriates funds to the Department of Education (DOE) to support the internship programs authorized under the Act, effective July 1, 2025.

## 1. Outcomes and successes of the program.

The Workforce Development Division (WDD) administers the Hele Imua Internship Program, a statewide initiative launched as a pilot in Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 and continued through FY2025. The program offers internship opportunities to current public high school students, college students, and recent graduates across a variety of State agencies.

Internship placements spanned a diverse range of occupational fields, including Information Technology Specialist, Human Resources Assistant, Program Specialist, Accountant, Environmental Health Specialist, Engineer, Research Statistician, Marketing Specialist, Housing Coordinator, and Elections Specialist. The Hele Imua

Internship Program continues to expand access to work-based learning experiences within State government, supporting the development of Hawai‘i’s future workforce and strengthening career pathways into public service.

In November 2025, the WDD presented its inaugural **Ka Liko Lawelawe Award**, honoring one professional from each county who demonstrates exceptional promise, professionalism, and embodies the spirit of Aloha.

The award recognized the following individuals for their positive impact during their internship and successful transition into public service employment with the State of Hawai‘i:

**Kiani Aburamen of Hawai‘i County** is currently employed as an Administrative Assistant to the Chief Human Resources Officer at Hilo Benioff Medical Center. Her dedication, collaborative spirit, and unwavering work ethic make her an exemplary employee and a valued member of the organization.

**Juliet Madrid of Kaua‘i County** is currently employed as an Office Assistant III at the Kaua‘i District Health Office in the Department of Health. She demonstrates strong collaboration and teamwork and delivers excellent customer service, embodies the Aloha Spirit, and exemplifies a commitment to public service.

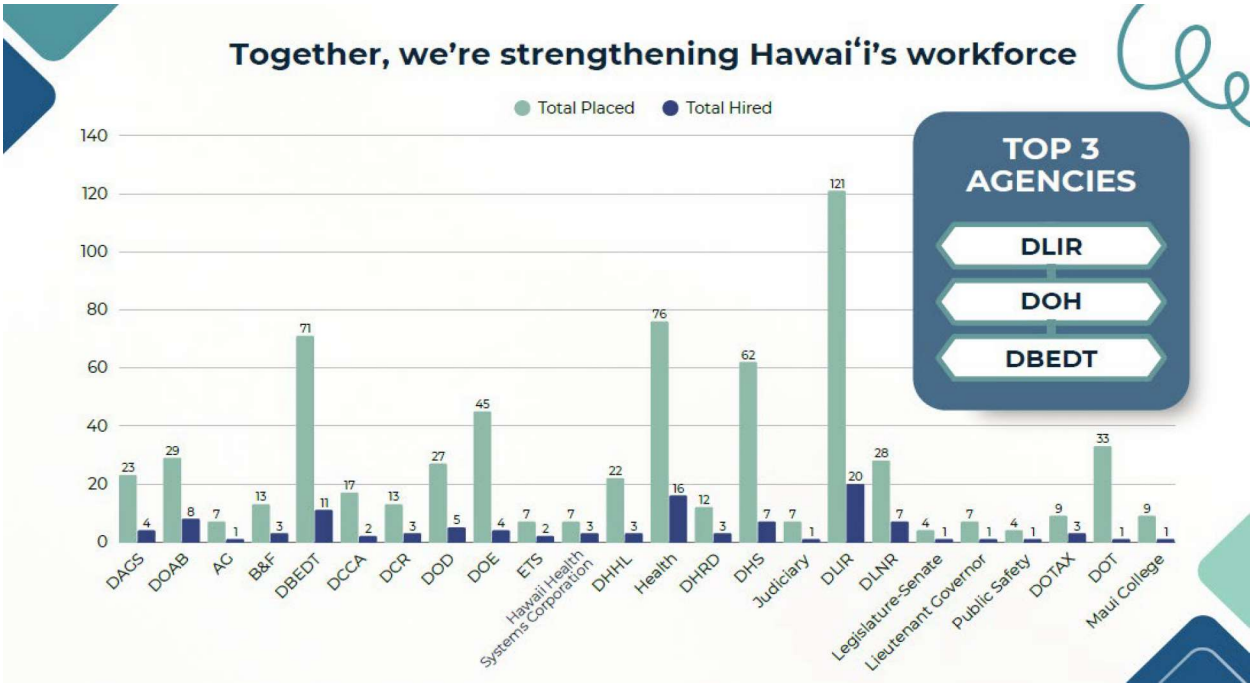
**Justin Silva of Maui County** is currently employed as an Office Assistant in the Unemployment Insurance Division in the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations. He is positive, kind, friendly, and cheerful team member who conveys the aloha spirit and a desire to help others as a public servant.

**Angela Lindberg of Honolulu County** is currently employed as a Substance Abuse Counselor at the Waiawa Correctional Facility in the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. Her dedication and commitment to the department is truly remarkable, and her service truly embodies the aloha spirit, both cultural philosophy and a way of life deeply rooted in Hawaiian values, and treats her clients with love, respect, and compassion.

DLIR honors the commitment and support of host agencies through the **Ho‘okele Award**, presented to the most outstanding host agency. “Ho‘okele” means “to navigate,” a fitting tribute to agencies that guide and mentor emerging professionals on their journey into public service in Hawai‘i. DLIR proudly recognizes the 32 **Hilo Benioff Medical Center** as the inaugural recipient.

**2. <u>The number of interns who enrolled in the program and exited the program during the previous fiscal year.</u>**

In FY 2025, a total of 386 interns were placed in State agencies. Of these, 182 were high school students who participated in a summer internship program that included financial literacy workshops to enhance career readiness and foundational life skills. Since its inception, the Hele Imua Internship Program has placed 904 interns in State offices and agencies across Hawai‘i, Kaua‘i, Maui County, and O‘ahu.

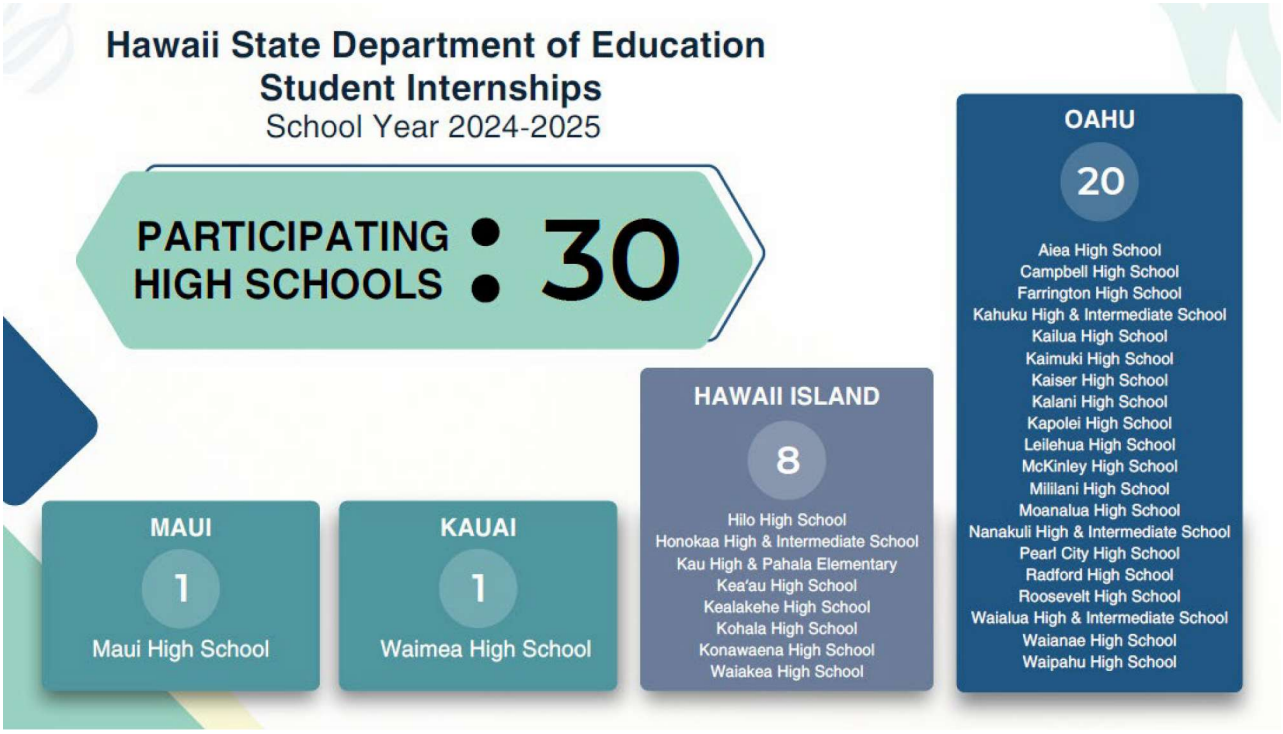



**3. <u>The names of the private or public sector organizations where intern placements were made.</u>**

Internship placements were made across a broad range of State offices and agencies, including:

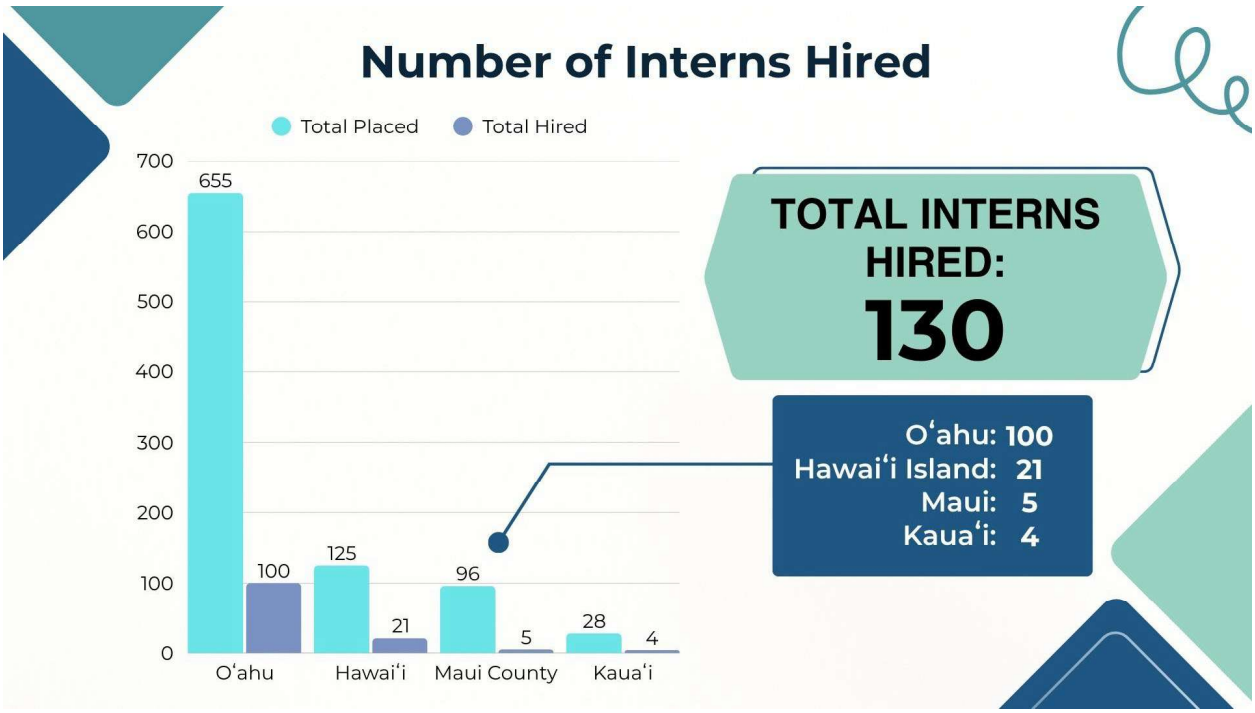
| | |
|---|---|
| • Department of Accounting and General Services (DAGS) | • Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL) |
| • Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (DAB) | • Department of Health (DOH) |
| • Department of the Attorney General (AG) | • Department of Human Resources Development (DHRD) |
| • Department of Budget and Finance (B&F) | • Department of Human Services (DHS) |
| • Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) | • Office of Information Technology Services (OITS) |
| • Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs (DCCA) | • Judiciary |
| • Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DCR) | • Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR) |
| • Department of Defense (DOD) | • Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) |
| • Department of Education (DOE) | • Department of Law Enforcement |
| • Office of Elections | • Legislature and Legislative Reference Bureau |
| • Enterprise Technology Services (ETS) | • Department of Public Safety |
| • Office of the Governor | • Senate |
| • Office of the Lieutenant Governor | • Department of Taxation (DOTAX) |
| • Hawai'i Health Systems Corporation (HHSC) | • University Of Hawai'i |
| • Hawai'i State Public Library System (HSPLS) | |

In FY 2025, in collaboration with the Department of Education (DOE), the Hele Imua Internship Program engaged student interns from 30 public high schools across the State.




## 4. Data on intern performance and retention rates.

In FY 2025, WDD placed 204 interns who were recent high school graduates, college students, or recent college graduates, and 17 of those interns were hired upon completion of their internships. Since the inception of the Hele Imua Internship Program, there have been a total of 130 interns hired.




## 5. Costs associated with the program.

Since its inception, the Hele Imua Internship Program has incurred costs totaling more than $5 million dollars.

## 6. Any proposed legislation.

The department recently initiated its first private-sector pilot of the Hele Imua Internship Program in the agriculture sector to evaluate operational feasibility and program design. This pilot serves as a critical trial phase to assess program effectiveness, identify challenges and risks, and surface implementation issues. Lessons learned from the pilot will inform program refinement and guide advising the Legislature on the program's sustainability and potential expansion to additional industries.

Based on implementation experience to date, the Department recommends the following clarifying amendments to Act 251:

- Reimbursing employers up to $20.00 per hour for intern wages,
- Employers contributing fifty percent of the intern's wages only, and
- Participating registered apprenticeship sponsors offering on-the-job training in private sector projects only.

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