
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO LAW ENFORCEMENT.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that sworn law
2 enforcement personnel of the department of law enforcement
3 perform statewide public safety functions that are essential to
4 the protection of life, property, and the rule of law throughout
5 the State. These functions include providing law enforcement
6 services at the courts, the Hawaii state capitol, airports, and
7 harbors, as well as conducting cyber investigations,
8 agricultural enforcement, fireworks enforcement, warrant
9 service, evictions, and participation in joint state and federal
10 task force operations. The department's responsibilities are
11 specialized, high-risk, and statewide in scope, requiring
12 advanced training, certification, and operational readiness.

13 The legislature further finds that significant disparities
14 in compensation exist between sworn personnel employed by the
15 department of law enforcement and similarly situated sworn
16 officers employed by county police departments. These
17 disparities have created a persistent and growing gap in pay for



1 comparable training, certification, risk exposure, and
2 professional responsibility.

3 The legislature recognizes that the department of law
4 enforcement competes in the same labor market for qualified
5 sworn officers but is constrained by salary structures that are
6 materially lower than those offered by county police
7 departments. As a result, the department faces increasing
8 difficulty in recruiting new officers, retaining experienced
9 personnel, and preventing the loss of trained staff to higher-
10 paying law enforcement agencies. This turnover diminishes
11 institutional knowledge, increases overtime and training costs,
12 and weakens the continuity and effectiveness of statewide law
13 enforcement operations.

14 The legislature additionally finds that recruiting and
15 retaining sworn personnel is particularly challenging given
16 Hawaii's high cost of living, demanding work conditions, and the
17 specialized nature of the department's mission. Without
18 targeted intervention, the department will continue to
19 experience staffing instability that threatens operational
20 readiness and public safety.



1 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to establish, and
2 appropriate funds for, the kūpa'a law enforcement retention bonus
3 program to provide law enforcement officers retention bonuses.

4 SECTION 2. (a) There is established the kūpa'a law
5 enforcement retention bonus program within the department of law
6 enforcement to promote recruitment, retention, and continuity of
7 service within the department of law enforcement by providing
8 law enforcement officers retention bonuses.

9 (b) Beginning July 1, 2026, the program shall provide a
10 retention bonus of \$15,000 to any law enforcement officer
11 appointed pursuant to section 353C-4, Hawaii Revised Statutes,
12 who:

13 (1) Is a full-time employee of the department of law
14 enforcement;
15 (2) Is vested with law enforcement authority under state
16 law; and
17 (3) Has worked a minimum of two thousand hours during the
18 preceding fiscal year; provided that this minimum hour
19 requirement shall include regular duty hours and
20 approved overtime, sick leave, and vacation leave.



4 (d) The retention bonus awarded pursuant to this section
5 shall be a:

6 (1) Non-base, non-pensionable payment that is not included
7 in the calculation of base salary, retirement
8 benefits, or any other salary-based benefit; and
9 (2) One-time payment awarded in addition to a law
10 enforcement officer's regular salary.

11 (e) The department of law enforcement shall maintain
12 records related to the program, including:

13 (1) The number of law enforcement officers receiving
14 retention bonuses:

15 (2) The years of service of the law enforcement officers
16 receiving retention bonuses:

17 (3) The assignment categories of the law enforcement
18 officers receiving retention bonuses; and

19 (4) Any other information the department of law
20 enforcement deems necessary to administer the pro

1 The department of law enforcement shall provide the
2 information maintained pursuant to this subsection in aggregate
3 form and shall not disclose personally identifiable information.

4 (f) The department of law enforcement may adopt rules,
5 pursuant to chapter 91, Hawaii Revised Statutes, necessary to
6 administer the kūpa'a law enforcement retention bonus program.

7 (g) The department of law enforcement shall submit a
8 report to the legislature no later than December 1, 2028,
9 evaluating the effectiveness of the kūpa'a law enforcement
10 retention bonus program. The report shall include, at minimum:

- 11 (1) The records collected pursuant to subsection (e);
- 12 (2) Data regarding changes in vacancy rates, turnover, and
13 average length of service among law enforcement
14 officers during the program's implementation;
- 15 (3) An assessment of the program's impact on recruitment,
16 retention, and operation readiness;
- 17 (4) A fiscal analysis comparing costs of the program with
18 savings or cost avoidance attributable to reduced
19 overtime, reduced training and onboarding of new law
20 enforcement officers, and improved workforce
21 stability; and



3 (h) The kūpa'a law enforcement retention bonus program
4 shall end on June 30, 2028; provided that any obligations
5 properly incurred prior may be paid.

6 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
7 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
8 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 for
9 the kūpa‘a law enforcement retention bonus program.

10 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
11 law enforcement for the purposes of this Act.

12 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.

13

INTRODUCED BY:

JAN 26 2026



H.B. NO. 2153

Report Title:

Kūpa'a Law Enforcement Retention Bonus Program; Retention Bonuses; Law Enforcement Officers; Department of Law Enforcement; Appropriation

Description:

Establishes, and appropriates funds for, the Kūpa'a Law Enforcement Retention Bonus Program to provide law enforcement officers retention bonuses.

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