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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

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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.



1           (c) The department of law enforcement may change any of  
2 the requirements established pursuant to subsection (b) each  
3 fiscal year for the duration of the program.

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 program.



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



(5) Any recommendations regarding the extension,  
modification, or termination of the program.

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

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

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

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

INTRODUCED BY:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Alan', written over a horizontal line.

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.

*The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

