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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO THE WAGE AND HOUR LAW.

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

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that wage theft remains a  
2 persistent problem in Hawaii, disproportionately impacting  
3 low-wage, immigrant, and other vulnerable workers. Although  
4 existing law provides strong wage and hour protections,  
5 enforcement remains primarily complaint-driven, limiting  
6 effectiveness when workers face language barriers, fear  
7 retaliation, or lack access to trusted reporting channels.

8           The legislature further finds that community-based  
9 enforcement partnerships have proven effective in increasing  
10 compliance, improving detection of violations, and strengthening  
11 worker trust without expanding regulatory burdens on compliant  
12 employers.

13           The purpose of this Act is to supplement existing  
14 enforcement under the wage and hour law by authorizing the  
15 department of labor and industrial relations to partner with



1 trusted community-based organizations to enhance outreach,  
2 referrals, and the recovery of stolen wages.

3 SECTION 2. Chapter 387, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
4 amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated  
5 and to read as follows:

6 "§387- Community wage theft enforcement partnership  
7 program. (a) The department may establish a community wage  
8 theft enforcement partnership program to support enforcement of  
9 this chapter.

10 (b) Under the community wage theft enforcement partnership  
11 program, the department may enter into contracts or memoranda of  
12 agreement with community-based organizations to:

13 (1) Provide education to workers regarding wage and hour  
14 rights under this chapter;

15 (2) Assist workers in documenting potential wage and hour  
16 violations;

17 (3) Refer suspected violations to the wage standards  
18 division for investigation; and

19 (4) Provide navigation and language-access support during  
20 the enforcement process.



1        (c) Community-based organizations participating in the  
2 program shall not conduct investigations or exercise enforcement  
3 authority.

4        (d) Information obtained through the community wage theft  
5 enforcement partnership program may be used by the department to  
6 initiate or support investigations, audits, or enforcement  
7 actions under this chapter.

8        (e) No employer shall retaliate against an employee for  
9 participating in, or receiving assistance through, the community  
10 wage theft enforcement partnership program. Retaliation shall  
11 be subject to penalties and remedies pursuant to section 387-12.

12       (f) The department shall submit an annual report  
13 describing activities of the community wage theft enforcement  
14 partnership program, including the number of partnerships  
15 established, workers assisted, and wages recovered to the  
16 legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of  
17 each regular session.

18       (g) Nothing in this section shall be construed to limit,  
19 delay, or replace the department's existing enforcement  
20 authority or complaint intake process.



1        (h) For purposes of this section, "community-based  
2        organization" means a nonprofit corporation incorporated in the  
3        State that is organized and controlled by either a geographic  
4        community, a community of identity, or a community of interest  
5        and that is directly involved in community-based economic  
6        development activities that demonstrated experience serving low-  
7        wage or vulnerable worker populations and has the capacity to  
8        protect confidentiality."

9        SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general  
10       revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$                      or so  
11       much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 for  
12       the community wage theft enforcement partnership program.

13       The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of  
14       labor and industrial relations for the purposes of this Act.

15       SECTION 4. New statutory material is underscored.

16       SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.

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INTRODUCED BY: \_\_\_\_\_



JAN 27 2026



# H.B. NO. 2446

**Report Title:**

DLIR; Wage and Hour Law; Community Wage Theft Enforcement Partnership Program; Appropriation

**Description:**

Authorizes the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations to establish a Community Wage Theft Enforcement Partnership Program and enter into contracts or memoranda of agreements with community-based organizations to enhance outreach, referral, and recovery of stolen wages. Appropriates funds.

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

