

JAN 21 2026

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## 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, agricultural  
8 enforcement, fireworks enforcement, warrant service, evictions,  
9 and participation in joint state and federal task force  
10 operations. The department's responsibilities are specialized,  
11 high-risk, and statewide in scope, requiring advanced training,  
12 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 further finds that recruiting and retaining  
15 sworn personnel is particularly challenging given Hawaii's high  
16 cost of living, demanding work conditions, and the specialized  
17 nature of the department of law enforcement'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 the  
2        kupaa retention bonus program to promote recruitment, retention,  
3        and continuity of service within the department of law  
4        enforcement.

5            SECTION 2. Chapter 353C, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
6        amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated  
7        and to read as follows:

8            **"§353C-        Kupaa retention bonus program; established.** (a)  
9        There is established in the department the kupaa retention bonus  
10        program for sworn law enforcement officers to provide monetary  
11        awards to promote recruitment, retention, and continuity of  
12        services within the department.

13            (b) The department shall administer the program as  
14        follows:

15            (1) A sworn law enforcement officer who is a full-time  
16        employee of the department shall be eligible to  
17        receive a retention bonus if the officer has worked a  
18        minimum of two thousand hours, including regular duty  
19        hours, approved overtime, sick leave, and vacation  
20        leave, during the preceding fiscal year;



1       (2) The department shall award a retention bonus of  
2       \$15,000 to each eligible sworn law enforcement officer  
3       who satisfies the requirements of this section for the  
4       applicable fiscal year;

5       (3) The retention bonus awarded shall be a non-base, non-  
6       pensionable payment and shall not be included in the  
7       calculation of base salary, retirement benefits, or  
8       any other salary-based benefit; and

9       (4) The department shall retain records related to the  
10      program, including the number of sworn officers  
11      receiving bonuses, years of service, assignment  
12      categories, and any other information the department  
13      deems necessary to administer the program; provided  
14      that the department shall provide the information only  
15      in aggregate form and shall not disclose personally  
16      identifiable information.

17      (c) After June 30, 2028, no bonuses shall be issued under  
18      this section; provided that any obligations properly incurred  
19      before that date shall be paid.

20      (d) As used in this section:



1        "Bonus" means a one-time, non-base payment awarded in  
2        addition to an officer's regular salary.

3        "Sworn law enforcement officer" means any full-time  
4        employee of the department appointed to be a state law  
5        enforcement officer pursuant to section 353C-4."

6        SECTION 3. The department of law enforcement shall submit  
7        a report to the legislature no later than December 1, 2028,  
8        evaluating the effectiveness of the kupaa retention bonus  
9        program established by section 2 of this Act. The report shall  
10      include:

- 11        (1) The number of sworn law enforcement officers that have  
12            received a retention bonus for each fiscal year;
- 13        (2) Changes in vacancy rates, turnover, and average length  
14            of service among sworn personnel during the period of  
15            implementation;
- 16        (3) An assessment of the program's impact on recruitment,  
17            retention, and operational readiness;
- 18        (4) A fiscal analysis comparing the costs of the program  
19            with savings or cost avoidance attributable to reduced  
20            overtime, reduced training and onboarding of new  
21            officers, and improved workforce stability; and



4 SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general  
5 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so  
6 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 for  
7 the kupaa law enforcement retention bonus program to provide  
8 retention bonuses in the amount of \$15,000 to eligible sworn law  
9 enforcement officers.

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

**12** SECTION 5. New statutory material is underscored.

13 SECTION 6. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2026, and  
14 shall repeal on June 30, 2028.

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INTRODUCED BY: Carol Johnson



# S.B. NO. 2382

**Report Title:**

Department of Law Enforcement; Kupaa Retention Bonus Program; Law Enforcement Retention; Staffing; Appropriation

**Description:**

Establishes the Kupaa Retention Bonus Program to be administered by the department of law enforcement to provide \$15,000 retention bonuses to eligible sworn law enforcement officers that have worked a minimum of two thousand hours during the preceding fiscal year. Requires the department of law enforcement to report to the legislature on the effectiveness of the Kupaa Retention Bonus Program. Appropriates funds for the Kupaa Retention Bonus Program. Sunsets 6/30/2028.

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

