

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 provide a  
2        \$15,000 retention bonus to all eligible sworn personnel of the  
3        department of law enforcement.

4           SECTION 2. (a) The department of law enforcement shall  
5        provide a retention bonus in the amount of \$15,000 to all  
6        eligible sworn personnel that:

7                (1) Are employed full-time as sworn law enforcement  
8                officers under section 353C-4, Hawaii Revised  
9                Statutes, with the department of law enforcement  
10                within the preceding fiscal year; and  
11                (2) Completed at least two thousand hours of service,  
12                including regular duty hours, approved overtime hours,  
13                approved sick leave, and approved vacation leave,  
14                during the preceding fiscal year.

15                (b) The department of law enforcement shall verify  
16        eligibility based on payroll, attendance, and leave records for  
17        the preceding fiscal year.

18                (c) The retention bonus authorized by this Act shall be:  
19                (1) Payable on an annual basis for each fiscal year in  
20                which an officer meets the eligibility requirements of  
21                this section;



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 payment of retention bonuses required by section 2 of this Act.

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.

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INTRODUCED BY: *Carol Fahnstock*



# S.B. NO. 2383

**Report Title:**

DLE; Retention Bonus; Appropriation

**Description:**

Requires the Department of Law Enforcement to provide \$15,000 retention bonuses to all eligible sworn law enforcement officers who meet specified requirements. Requires the Department of Law Enforcement to verify eligibility. Appropriates funds for the payment of retention bonuses.

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