

JAN 23 2026

S.B. NO. 2909

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO PERMITTING.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the Simplifying
2 Permitting for Enhanced Economic Development (SPEED) task force
3 was established pursuant to Act 133, Session Laws of Hawaii
4 2025. The SPEED task force brought together various state and
5 county agencies and stakeholders to address issues related to
6 obtaining permits for housing, infrastructure, and other
7 projects. The legislature further finds that the SPEED task
8 force is responsible for identifying actions taken, challenges
9 encountered, and legislative measures needed to facilitate,
10 expedite, and coordinate state and intergovernmental permitting
11 processes.

12 In its initial phase, the SPEED task force split into three
13 permitted interaction groups, each focused on a specific, high-
14 impact segment of the permitting system. The SPEED task force
15 then submitted to the legislature a December 2025 final report
16 of the permitted interaction groups, representing a combined
17 report of the three permitted interaction groups, which outlined



1 findings regarding existing actions and persistent challenges
2 and presented initial recommendations for legislative and
3 administrative measures to improve permitting processes
4 statewide.

5 The legislature additionally finds that in the December
6 2025 final report, the SPEED task force identified issues
7 related to understaffing and recruitment as a common impediment
8 to the permitting process. County departments identified this
9 issue as a major cause of permit backlog and poor plan quality.
10 The SPEED task force recommended that the legislature invest in
11 a long-term permitting workforce strategy to support the
12 recruitment and retention of state and county employees that
13 fill these key roles.

14 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to require the
15 department of business, economic development, and tourism to:

16 (1) Develop a permitting workforce pipeline in partnership
17 with the University of Hawaii and community colleges;
18 and

19 (2) Coordinate with state and county permitting agencies
20 on certain tasks related to the classification levels,



1 salary and benefits, hiring, and responsibilities of
2 employees.

3 SECTION 2. (a) The department of business, economic
4 development, and tourism shall, in partnership with the
5 University of Hawaii and community colleges, develop a
6 permitting workforce pipeline to support the recruitment of new
7 state and county permitting agency employees.

8 (b) The permitting workforce pipeline shall:

9 (1) Include tuition incentives for college students that
10 enter state and county permitting agency jobs;

11 (2) Establish clear service commitments for students
12 receiving tuition benefits; and

13 (3) Match students with state and county permitting
14 agencies.

15 (c) The department of business, economic development, and
16 tourism shall coordinate with applicable state and county
17 permitting agencies to:

18 (1) Develop classification levels for permit technicians
19 and plan reviewers and ensure opportunities for career
20 advancement;



(2) Develop salary and benefit scales that are comparable to the private sector;

(3) Develop emergency hiring processes to be used by agencies to fill immediate gaps;

(4) Ensure greater flexibility in hiring with respect to salary and minimum qualifications; and

(5) Ensure that trainee and junior reviewer employees can handle routine scopes under supervision.

(c) The department of business, economic development, and tourism may consult with the department of human resources development when developing the classification levels, salary and benefit scales, and hiring processes pursuant to subsection (b).

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 department of business, economic development, and tourism to develop a permitting workforce pipeline and coordinate with state and county permitting agencies on certain tasks related to classification levels, salary and benefits, hiring, and responsibilities of employees pursuant to section 2 of this Act.

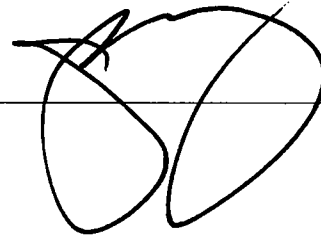


1 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
2 business, economic development, and tourism for the purposes of
3 this Act.

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

5

INTRODUCED BY: _____

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'A' followed by a large, loopy 'O'.

S.B. NO. 2909

Report Title:

Permitting; Permitting Workforce Pipeline; Hiring; Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism; University of Hawaii; Community Colleges; Counties; Appropriation

Description:

Implements certain recommendations of the SPEED Task Force. Requires the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism to develop a permitting workforce pipeline in partnership with the University of Hawaii and community colleges and coordinate with state and county permitting agencies on certain tasks related to classification levels, salary and benefits, hiring, and responsibilities of employees. Appropriates funds.

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