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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION | KA 'OIHANA ALAKAU
869 PUNCHBOWL STREET
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Thursday February 26, 2026
10:00 a.m.
State Capitol, 308

**HB2335,HD1
RELATING TO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

House Committee on Finance

The Department of Transportation (DOT) strong support HB2335, HD1, relating to state-funded internship and workforce development programs.

This bill proposes to amend Chapter 76, Hawaii Revised Statutes, by adding a new section which would make interns who have completed 480 hours of work experience within a department or agency eligible for internal recruitment within that department or agency. The intern will compete, within a smaller pool of internal applicants, satisfying the merit principle. Moreover, the requirement of nine hundred sixty hours versus four hundred eighty hours to be eligible for an internal recruitment seems arbitrary in the larger context of public service recruitment and the development of innovative recruitment methods.

HDOT believes that this legislation will benefit both the state and interns by creating a low-cost benefit that increases the value of state-funded internships and creates a clear pathway from internships to a career in state government. This legislation aligns with HDOT's ongoing commitment to build a strong, skilled, and locally rooted public workforce. By recognizing the value of hands-on experience gained through state-funded programs, the legislation creates a pathway for qualified individuals to transition into full-time roles within government agencies.

Interns applying for positions through internal recruitment allows the subject matter expert department to performing the screening and review, eliminating DHRD's screening process. This reduces the amount of time and effort required to apply for and fill a position. Removing this layer of bureaucracy makes the hiring process easier for interns, increasing the likelihood that the state will be able to successfully recruit them. This reduction in recruitment time also allows state departments to compete with other employers because they will have the opportunity to give a quality, qualified intern a timely offer. Often, state departments fail to hire highly desired applicants because they are hired quickly by private companies or other government entities.

Significantly, this legislation limits the priority consideration to instances where the intern is applying for a position in the same department where the intern worked. This is important because this ensures that the hiring department has experience with the intern and the work product produced.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill.



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

Date: 02/26/2026

Time: 10:00 AM

Location: 308 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Committee: FIN

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB2335, HD1, RELATING TO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT.

Purpose of Bill: Establishes that certain participants in state-funded internship and workforce development programs are eligible for internal recruitment. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on HB 2335 HD 1. We support the intent of creating pathways for interns to transition into state employment.

However, we have concerns about implementing this through statutory changes to Chapter 76. This bill would allow interns to access internal job announcements before new civil service employees, who must complete a 6-month probationary period first, creating potential inequities in the merit system. Additionally, a 480-hour internship may not satisfy minimum qualification requirements for many positions.

Rather than statutory language, we recommend a skills-based hiring approach implemented through creating new or modifying existing departmental policies and procedures. This would allow us to:

- Recognize internship experience as one of multiple pathways to meet minimum qualifications alongside education, work experience, military service, and other relevant backgrounds;
- Focus qualification requirements on demonstrated competencies rather than rigid credential requirements such as traditional academic degrees;
- Maintain merit principles by applying consistent competency standards to all candidates, whether they come from internships, traditional backgrounds, or alternative pathways; and
- Retain the flexibility to adjust policies based on changing workforce needs without requiring legislative amendments.

A skills-based framework would accomplish what HB 2335 HD 1 intends—valuing the experience interns gain in state service—while also modernizing our hiring practices to

attract diverse talent pools and maintain the integrity of our merit system.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 2335 HD 1.

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Statement of
BRENN A H. HASHIMOTO
Director, Department of Human Resources Development

Before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
Thursday, February 26, 2026
10:00 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 308

In consideration of
HB2335 HD1, RELATING TO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and the members of the Committee:

The Department of Human Resources Development (HRD) offers comments on HB2335 HD1.

The purpose of this measure is to establish that certain participants in state-funded internship and workforce development programs are eligible for internal recruitment.

HB2335 HD1 amends Chapter 76, Hawai'i Revised Statutes, to deem an intern eligible for internal recruitment within the same department or agency after completing four hundred eighty hours of work (which equates to 3 months) of experience through a state-funded internship or workforce development program.

HRD supports the goal of retaining individuals who have gained relevant experience within State government. The State invests time and resources in training interns and creating clearer pathways into public service, which supports recruitment, workforce continuity, and institutional knowledge.

However, HRD has concerns with the bill as currently drafted.

Internal recruitment under Chapter 76 has historically been limited to existing civil service employees. Expanding eligibility to interns raises merit and equity concerns and may restrict access for external applicants who are similarly qualified.

The bill requires only 3 months of service for an intern or workforce development participant before becoming eligible for internal vacancy announcements (commonly referred to as IVA). In contrast, probationary full-time civil service employees must complete 960 hours of service, or approximately six months, before becoming eligible for IVA placement. Probationary employees are appointed through competitive recruitment, placed into classified positions, and subject to formal performance evaluation during the probationary period.

As drafted, the measure would allow interns, who are not appointed to civil service positions and are not subject to probationary standards, to access internal recruitment at half the service threshold required of probationary civil service employees. This results in an inequitable outcome and weakens the integrity of the internal recruitment process.

HRD also notes that internship experience is already recognized within the existing framework. When internship experience is relevant to the position being applied for, examiners factor it into the evaluation of minimum qualification requirements. This approach preserves merit principles while acknowledging the value of practical experience.

As discussed previously, HRD supports internship and workforce development programs. We are committed to working with the Department of Transportation to refine the bill language and establish intern requirements that are equitable for all applicants and consistent with merit principles under Chapter 76.

We are available to answer any questions.



February 24, 2026

Position: **SUPPORT** of **HB1859 HD1**, Relating to Workforce Development

To: Representative Chris Todd, Chair
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Finance

From: Llasmin Chaine, LSW, Executive Director, Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women

Re: Testimony in **SUPPORT** of **HB1859 HD1**, Relating to Workforce Development

Hearing: Thursday, February 26, 2026, 10:00 a.m.
Conference Room 308, State Capitol

The Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women recognizes the importance of coordinated workforce development efforts in advancing economic opportunity and gender equity across Hawaii. The Commission **supports HB1859 HD1**, as a comprehensive statewide workforce strategy can help ensure that the unique needs and barriers faced by women and other underrepresented groups are addressed within the State's workforce initiatives.

Centralizing the responsibility for developing and aligning the workforce strategy with the Workforce Development Council has the potential to reduce duplication, improve efficiency, and foster stronger interagency collaboration. When county and state entities work together under a unified plan, there is greater potential to identify and address gaps in services, particularly those that disproportionately affect women, such as access to training, childcare, and non-traditional career pathways.

However, the effectiveness of this approach depends on the inclusivity of the strategy development process. It is essential that the comprehensive statewide workforce strategy explicitly considers the needs of women, including those from marginalized communities, and incorporates input from organizations and stakeholders with expertise in gender equity. **Best practices in workforce planning emphasize the importance of disaggregated data and targeted interventions to close persistent gender gaps in employment and wages.**

We encourage the inclusion of gender-specific benchmarks and accountability measures in annual reporting and in the State Unified Plan. Such steps will help ensure that the benefits of a coordinated workforce strategy are equitably realized by all residents of Hawaii.

The Commission **urges prompt passage of HB1859 HD1**. Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony.