

OFFICE OF INFORMATION PRACTICES

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To: House Committee on Labor

From: Carlotta Amerino, Director

Date: February 5, 2026, 9:30 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 309

Re: Testimony on H.B. No. 2383
Relating to the Workforce Pell Grant Program

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this bill, which would create an authorization process and otherwise support implementation of a workforce Pell grant program. The Office of Information Practices (OIP) takes no position on the substance of this bill, but has concerns about a confidentiality provision in proposed section __-7, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS).

Proposed subsection __-7(d), on bill page 11, provides that program-related information shared between the University of Hawaii (UH) and the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR) and “designated as confidential” is “protected from public disclosure consistent with chapter 92F.” It is not clear whether this is intended to mean that such information is confidential only to the extent it falls within an exception to disclosure under chapter 92F, the Uniform Information Practices Act (UIPA), or whether it was intended to make the information confidential and not subject to disclosure under the UIPA, period.

The UIPA sets uniform standards for what information in government records may be withheld in response to public record requests. It would be inconsistent with the UIPA’s standards to authorize UH and DLIR to declare

information confidential regardless of whether an exception to the UIPA would apply to it. Thus, OIP respectfully recommends that this confidentiality provision be **amended to clarify that it authorizes information designated as confidential to be protected only to the extent it falls within one of the UIPA's exceptions to public disclosure.** The following language would accomplish that (changed language is underlined):

“(d) Information produced pursuant to this section and designated as confidential shall be protected from public disclosure to the extent authorized by chapter 92F.”

Thank you for considering OIP's testimony.



**TESTIMONY OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2026**

ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:

H.B. NO. 2383, RELATING TO THE WORKFORCE PELL GRANT PROGRAM.

BEFORE THE:

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR

DATE: Thursday, February 5, 2026 **TIME:** 9:30 a.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 309

TESTIFIER(S): Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or
Candace J. Park, Deputy Attorney General

Chair Sayama and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Attorney General provides the following comments.

This bill establishes the Workforce Pell Grant Program Approval Committee within the Workforce Development Council to implement the federal Workforce Pell Grant Program. This bill requires the University of Hawai'i to develop and maintain system-wide stackable credential pathways linking short-term workforce credentials to higher-level certificates and degrees; to annually publish pathway maps and report to the Workforce Development Council; to collect and report program-level data as required under federal law; and to monitor performance against federal benchmarks.

This bill implicates article X, section 6, of the Hawai'i Constitution, which gives the Board of Regents of the University of Hawai'i "exclusive jurisdiction over the internal structure, management, and operation of the university." Section 6 further provides: "This section shall not limit the power of the legislature to enact laws of statewide concern. The legislature shall have the exclusive jurisdiction to identify laws of statewide concern." We recommend an amendment that adds a statement identifying this bill as a law of statewide concern.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



JADE T. BUTAY
DIRECTOR

WILLIAM G. KUNSTMAN
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
KA 'OIHANA PONO LIMAHANA

February 5, 2026

To: The Honorable Jackson Sayama, Chair,
The Honorable Mike Lee, Vice-Chair, and
Members of the House Committee on Labor

Date: Thursday, February 5, 2026
Time: 9:30 a.m.
Place: Conference Room 309, State Capitol

From: Jade T. Butay, Director
Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR)

Re: H.B. 2383 RELATING TO THE WORKFORCE PELL GRANT PROGRAM

The **DLIR respectfully offers comments** on this measure. H.R.1, the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBA), requires the Governor to consult with the state workforce board when designating eligible workforce programs for the expanded Workforce Pell Grants. Rulemaking authority rests with the U.S. Department of Education (US DOE), while the U.S. Department of Labor's (US DOL) role is primarily supportive and technical. US DOL provides technical assistance to states and coordinates with federal workforce programs (such as WIOA and Perkins) to align training program identification with Workforce Pell criteria.

The US DOE is expected to publish a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) for Workforce Pell in the near future for public comments. The DLIR has extensive experience and expertise with federal grants, and we intend to draw upon that track record to contribute feedback and help ensure alignment with federal regulations. Our goal is to enable students to access financial aid while pursuing industry-recognized credentials that lead to sustainable wages and strengthen Hawai'i's labor force and economy.

Federal Pell Grants carry complex compliance, reporting, and audit requirements. Effective administration requires dedicated staff, specialized expertise, and a proven track record in managing federal grants. We encourage the Legislature to consider placing administration of the Workforce Pell Grant with an entity that has clear authority, demonstrated compliance experience, and the operational infrastructure necessary to ensure accountability and protect the State.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our comments.



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Labor
February 5, 2026 at 9:30 a.m.

By

Debora Halbert
Vice President for Academic Strategy
University of Hawai'i System

HB 2383 – RELATING TO THE WORKFORCE PELL GRANT PROGRAM.

Chair Sayama, Vice Chair Lee, and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i supports the intent of HB 2383 – Relating to the Workforce Pell Grant Program, which seeks to establish a statewide framework for the implementation of the federal Workforce Pell Grant Program. This legislation is a critical step toward expanding access to short-term workforce education and training programs that align with in-demand and high-wage occupations, ensuring that Hawai'i residents are equipped with the skills necessary to thrive in the modern economy.

The University of Hawai'i (UH) recognizes the importance of creating clear pathways for workforce development and is committed to playing a central role in this initiative. By requiring stackable credential pathways within the UH system, this bill ensures that learners who pursue Workforce Pell eligible credentials can progress seamlessly in pathways leading to higher-level certificates and degrees. This empowers students to pursue lifelong learning and career advancement and is aligned with UH's current pursuit of stackable credentials pathways across our system in high-demand fields.

Additionally, the bill's emphasis on secure data-sharing mechanisms and outcomes reporting aligns with UH's commitment to transparency and accountability. Although we do not have access to program-level data for all required data points, specifically for job placement, we look forward to continuing conversations with our state partners about how we can achieve that. By collecting and reporting program-level data on enrollment, completion, job placement, and earnings, we can ensure that workforce education programs are meeting their intended goals and providing meaningful opportunities for Hawai'i's residents.

While UH is supportive, we do have concerns that due to the federal administration not yet having completed its rulemaking process, some of the guidelines and criteria in this bill may be subject to change. UH has been working closely with the Workforce Development Council in anticipation of the final rulemaking, and we will continue to collaborate as this process moves forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this measure.



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR
Thursday, February 5, 2026 — 9:30 a.m.

The Workforce Development Council supports the intent of HB 2383, Relating to the Workforce Pell Grant Program, and offers comments.

Dear Chair Sayama and Members of the Committee:

My name is Keith DeMello, Chair of the State of Hawai'i Workforce Development Council (WDC). Pursuant to HRS Chapter 202, the WDC serves as the State's workforce policy and planning advisor, bringing together public, private-sector, and labor representatives appointed by the Governor to guide Hawai'i's workforce and economic development strategy.

I offer this testimony in support of the intent of HB 2383, which establishes a thoughtful framework for implementing Workforce Pell in Hawai'i, and we appreciate the Legislature's focus on advancing this important initiative. **We respectfully offer comments** focused on alignment with pending federal Workforce Pell rulemaking and on ensuring effective, timely statewide implementation.

At this stage, federal guidance is still emerging, and final program parameters have not yet been issued. Deferring prescriptive statutory language at this time allows the State to avoid misalignment with final federal rules, exercise sound judgment through rulemaking, and remain on track for July 1, 2026, implementation.

HB 2383 advances an important goal: expanding access to short-term, workforce-aligned credentials that lead to employment in high-demand fields and support economic mobility for Hawai'i's residents. For working adults, incumbent workers, and career-changers, these programs are often the most direct pathway to family-sustaining wages.

From a systems and governance perspective, the WDC appreciates the bill's flexibility. Consistent with guidance emerging from the National Governors Association Workforce Pell cohort, it is prudent to avoid locking highly technical and evolving definitions into statute at this time, where future federal guidance or labor market conditions may require adjustment.

it is prudent to avoid locking highly technical definitions, such as "high-wage occupation," "in-demand industry or occupation," and "stackable credential," into statute at this time. Allowing these definitions to be developed through a working group or approval committee will provide the flexibility needed to align with Hawai'i's labor market data, Workforce

Innovation and Opportunity Act priorities, and existing Perkins V high-skill, high-wage, high-demand frameworks.

In anticipation of implementation, and at the direction of the Office of the Governor, the WDC is already convening a cross-agency working group to support coordinated implementation and rulemaking. The working group is composed of representatives from the University of Hawai'i, the Workforce Development Division, the UH Community Colleges, and the Hawai'i State Department of Education. This group is actively collaborating to ensure the State is positioned to meet the July 1 implementation timeline. At the same time, we note that the additional administrative and coordination responsibilities contemplated under this framework will require appropriate resources for everyone to effectively carry out these obligations.

The WDC stands ready to continue working closely with the Legislature and our education and workforce partners as this framework is refined and implemented.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Keith DeMello,
Chair, Workforce Development Council



**Testimony to the House Committee on Labor
Representative Jackson D. Sayama, Chair
Representative Mike Lee, Vice Chair**

**Thursday, February 5, 2026, at 9:30AM
Conference Room 309 & Videoconference**

RE: HB2383 Relating to the Workforce Pell Grant Program

Aloha e Chair Sayama, Vice Chair Lee, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Sherry Menor, President and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce Hawaii ("The Chamber"). The Chamber supports House Bill 2383 (HB2383), which establishes a statewide framework for the implementation of the federal Workforce Pell Grant Program to provide financial aid for certain short-term workforce education and training programs within the Workforce Development Council.

HB2383 aligns with our 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii: An Economic Action Plan, specifically under the policy pillar for Economic Action. This bill promotes policies that drive economic growth and enhance workforce opportunities for key growth industries in Hawaii.

By enabling residents to access federal Pell grants for short-term, industry-aligned training programs, the bill helps prepare a skilled, locally based workforce that meets employer demand in high-growth sectors such as healthcare, technology, advanced manufacturing, and clean energy. Implementing this framework will reduce barriers to career-relevant training, accelerate access to in-demand credentials, and help more residents quickly enter the workforce or upskill for higher-paying roles. It also supports businesses by expanding the pipeline of qualified workers, decreasing recruitment challenges, and enhancing local talent retention. This bill represents state investment in the human capital necessary to satisfy Hawaii's workforce needs and create a more robust labor pool for employers. With the Chamber's efforts in industry-led workforce development through our Sector Partnerships programming, this bill will provide further momentum to the career pathway investments we have already made in these key industries.

We respectfully ask to pass House Bill 2383. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

The Chamber of Commerce Hawaii is the state's leading business advocacy organization, dedicated to improving Hawaii's economy and securing Hawaii's future for growth and opportunity. Our mission is to foster a vibrant economic climate. As such, we support initiatives and policies that align with the 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii that create opportunities to strengthen overall competitiveness, improve the quantity and skills of available workforce, diversify the economy, and build greater local wealth.