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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,  
8 agricultural enforcement, fireworks enforcement, warrant  
9 service, evictions, and participation in joint state and federal  
10 task force operations. The department's responsibilities are  
11 specialized, high-risk, and statewide in scope, requiring  
12 advanced training, 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 additionally finds that recruiting and  
15 retaining sworn personnel is particularly challenging given  
16 Hawaii's high cost of living, demanding work conditions, and the  
17 specialized nature of the department'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, and  
2 appropriate funds for, the kūpa‘a law enforcement retention bonus  
3 program to provide law enforcement officers retention bonuses.

4           SECTION 2. (a) There is established the kūpa‘a law  
5 enforcement retention bonus program within the department of law  
6 enforcement to promote recruitment, retention, and continuity of  
7 service within the department of law enforcement by providing  
8 law enforcement officers retention bonuses.

9           (b) Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, if negotiated  
10 through collective bargaining under section 89-9, Hawaii Revised  
11 Statutes, beginning July 1, 2026, the department of law  
12 enforcement shall provide a retention bonus of \$15,000 to any  
13 law enforcement officer appointed pursuant to section 353C-4(a),  
14 Hawaii Revised Statutes, who:

- 15           (1) Is a full-time employee of the department of law  
16               enforcement;
- 17           (2) Is vested with law enforcement authority under state  
18               law; and
- 19           (3) Has worked a minimum of two thousand hours during the  
20               preceding fiscal year; provided that this minimum hour



1 requirement shall include regular duty hours and  
2 approved overtime, sick leave, and vacation leave.

3 (c) Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, if negotiated  
4 through collective bargaining under section 89-9, Hawaii Revised  
5 Statutes, the department of law enforcement may change any of  
6 the requirements established pursuant to subsection (b) each  
7 fiscal year for the duration of the kūpa‘a law enforcement  
8 retention bonus program.

9 (d) Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, if negotiated  
10 through collective bargaining under section 89-9, Hawaii Revised  
11 Statutes, the retention bonus awarded pursuant to this section  
12 shall be a:

- 13 (1) Non-base, non-pensionable payment that is not included  
14 in the calculation of base salary, retirement  
15 benefits, or any other salary-based benefit; and
- 16 (2) One-time payment awarded in addition to a law  
17 enforcement officer's regular salary.

18 (e) The department of law enforcement shall maintain  
19 records related to the kūpa‘a law enforcement retention bonus  
20 program, including:



- 1           (1) The number of law enforcement officers receiving  
2                   retention bonuses;
- 3           (2) The years of service of the law enforcement officers  
4                   receiving retention bonuses;
- 5           (3) The assignment categories of the law enforcement  
6                   officers receiving retention bonuses; and
- 7           (4) Any other information the department of law  
8                   enforcement deems necessary to administer the program.

9           The department of law enforcement shall provide the  
10           information maintained pursuant to this subsection in aggregate  
11           form and shall not disclose personally identifiable information  
12           except as required under chapter 92F, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

13           (f) Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, if negotiated  
14           through collective bargaining under section 89-9, Hawaii Revised  
15           Statutes, the department of law enforcement may adopt rules  
16           pursuant to chapter 91, Hawaii Revised Statutes, necessary to  
17           administer the kūpa‘a law enforcement retention bonus program.

18           (g) The department of law enforcement shall submit a  
19           report to the legislature no later than December 1, 2028,  
20           evaluating the effectiveness of the kūpa‘a law enforcement  
21           retention bonus program. The report shall include, at minimum:



- 1 (1) The records collected pursuant to subsection (e);
- 2 (2) Data regarding changes in vacancy rates, turnover, and
- 3 average length of service among law enforcement
- 4 officers during the program's implementation;
- 5 (3) An assessment of the program's impact on recruitment,
- 6 retention, and operation readiness;
- 7 (4) A fiscal analysis comparing costs of the program with
- 8 savings or cost avoidance attributable to reduced
- 9 overtime, reduced training and onboarding of new law
- 10 enforcement officers, and improved workforce
- 11 stability; and
- 12 (5) Any recommendations regarding the extension,
- 13 modification, or termination of the program.
- 14 (h) The kūpa'a law enforcement retention bonus program
- 15 shall end on June 30, 2028; provided that any obligations
- 16 properly incurred before June 30, 2028, may be paid.

17 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general  
 18 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$                    or so  
 19 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 for  
 20 the kūpa'a law enforcement retention bonus program.

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

3           SECTION 4. The appropriation made by this Act shall not  
4 lapse at the end of the fiscal biennium for which the  
5 appropriation is made; provided that all moneys from the  
6 appropriation unencumbered as of June 30, 2028, shall lapse as  
7 of that date.

8           SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 3000.



**Report Title:**

DLE; Kūpa‘a Law Enforcement Retention Bonus Program; Retention Bonuses; Law Enforcement Officers; Appropriation

**Description:**

Establishes, and appropriates funds for, the Kūpa‘a Law Enforcement Retention Bonus Program within the Department of Law Enforcement to provide retention bonuses to Department law enforcement officers for three years. Effective 7/1/3000.  
(HD1)

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