THE SENATE
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2026
STATE OF HAWAII

S.B. NO. 2198

JAN 21 2026

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT.

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

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the *Meilleur Ouvrier de France*, meaning "best craftsperson of France", is a historic competition established in 1924 to recognize and revitalize traditional craftsmanship in France. The competition preserves and expands artisans' knowledge by fostering competition and publicly elevating craftsmanship. The *Meilleur Ouvrier de France* showcases France's unique culture through a diverse display of traditional professions in over two hundred categories, including florists, chefs, and carpenters.

The legislature notes that those vying for the *Meilleur Ouvrier de France* title are judged against a standard of perfection, rather than against each other, allowing for multiple or no awardees. Winners of the competition are hosted by the French President at the Elysee Palace, where they are awarded a medal and state diploma. *Meilleur Ouvrier de France* titles are awarded for life, christening winners as custodians

of their trade and tasking them with the preservation and generational sharing of their knowledge.

The legislature further finds that Hawaii also has a rich history of fine craftsmanship and is home to a wide variety of tradespersons. The legislature recognizes preserving cultural knowledge and promoting alternative career paths to diversify the economy as key priorities for the State.

Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to require the department of labor and industrial relations to study the establishment of a workforce excellence award program for craftspersons to demonstrate the State's dedication to preserving its significant cultural history and promote future participation in potentially dwindling trades.

SECTION 2. (a) The department of labor and industrial relations shall conduct a study, with industry input, on the establishment of a workforce excellence award program recognizing craftspersons in the State, under which nominations are collected from the public and annual awards are presented by the governor at a historically significant venue.

(b) The department of labor and industrial relations shall research, assess, and make recommendations on:

(1) A Hawaii workforce excellence award program similar to the *Meilleur Ouvrier de France* and how it may best be adapted to suit the State;

(2) Key industries to include in the Hawaii workforce excellence award program; and

(3) Cost-effective means of adopting the Hawaii workforce excellence award program.

(c) The department of labor and industrial relations shall submit a report of its findings and recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of the regular session of 2027.

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 to conduct a study on the establishment of a Hawaii workforce excellence award program.

The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of labor and industrial relations for the purposes of this Act.

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

INTRODUCED BY: _____

S.B. NO. 2198

Report Title:
DLIR; Hawaii Workforce Excellence Award Program; Study; Report; Appropriation

Description:
Requires the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations to study the establishment of a Hawaii Workforce Excellence Award Program. Requires a report to the Legislature. Appropriates funds.

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