
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 further finds that recruiting and retaining
15 sworn personnel is particularly challenging given the State's
16 high cost of living, demanding work conditions, and the
17 specialized nature of the department of law enforcement's
18 mission. Without targeted intervention, the department will
19 continue to experience staffing instability that threatens
20 operational readiness and public safety.



1 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to establish the
2 kupaa retention bonus program to promote recruitment, retention,
3 and continuity of service within the department of law
4 enforcement.

5 SECTION 2. Chapter 353C, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
6 amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated
7 and to read as follows:

8 **"§353C- Kupaa retention bonus program; established. (a)**

9 There is established in the department the kupaa retention bonus
10 program for sworn law enforcement officers to provide monetary
11 awards to promote recruitment, retention, and continuity of
12 services within the department.

13 (b) Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, if negotiated
14 through collective bargaining under section 89-9, the department
15 shall administer the program as follows:

16 (1) A sworn law enforcement officer who is a full-time
17 employee of the department shall be eligible to
18 receive a retention bonus if the officer has worked a
19 minimum of two thousand hours, including regular duty
20 hours, approved overtime, sick leave, and vacation
21 leave, during the preceding fiscal year;



1 (2) The department shall award a retention bonus of
2 \$15,000 to each eligible sworn law enforcement officer
3 who satisfies the requirements of this section for the
4 applicable fiscal year;

5 (3) The retention bonus awarded shall be a non-base,
6 non-pensionable payment and shall not be included in
7 the calculation of base salary, retirement benefits,
8 or any other salary-based benefit; and

9 (4) The department shall retain records related to the
10 program, including the number of sworn officers
11 receiving bonuses, years of service, assignment
12 categories, and any other information the department
13 deems necessary to administer the program; provided
14 that the department shall provide the information only
15 in aggregate form and shall not disclose personally
16 identifiable information.

17 (c) After June 30, 2028, no bonuses shall be issued under
18 this section; provided that any obligations properly incurred
19 before that date shall be paid.

20 (d) For the purposes of this section:



1 "Bonus" means a one-time, non-base payment awarded in
2 addition to an officer's regular salary.

3 "Sworn law enforcement officer" means any full-time
4 employee of the department appointed to be a state law
5 enforcement officer pursuant to section 353C-4."

6 SECTION 3. The department of law enforcement shall submit
7 a report to the legislature no later than December 1, 2028,
8 evaluating the effectiveness of the kupaa retention bonus
9 program established by section 2 of this Act. The report shall
10 include:

11 (1) The number of sworn law enforcement officers that have
12 received a retention bonus for each fiscal year;

13 (2) Changes in vacancy rates, turnover, and average length
14 of service among sworn personnel during the period of
15 implementation;

16 (3) An assessment of the program's impact on recruitment,
17 retention, and operational readiness;

18 (4) A fiscal analysis comparing the costs of the program
19 with savings or cost avoidance attributable to reduced
20 overtime, reduced training and onboarding of new
21 officers, and improved workforce stability; and



1 (5) Any recommendations regarding the continuation,
2 modification, or termination of the program beyond the
3 sunset date.

4 SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general
5 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
6 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 for
7 the kupaa law enforcement retention bonus program to provide
8 retention bonuses in the amount of \$15,000 to eligible sworn law
9 enforcement officers.

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

12 SECTION 5. New statutory material is underscored.

13 SECTION 6. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2026, and
14 shall repeal on June 30, 2028.



Report Title:

DLE; Kupaa Retention Bonus Program; Law Enforcement Retention; Staffing; Report; Appropriation

Description:

Establishes the Kupaa Retention Bonus Program to be administered by the Department of Law Enforcement to provide \$15,000 retention bonuses to eligible sworn law enforcement officers that have worked a minimum of two thousand hours during the preceding fiscal year, subject to collective bargaining negotiations. Requires the Department of Law Enforcement to report to the Legislature on the effectiveness of the Kupaa Retention Bonus Program. Appropriates funds for the Kupaa Retention Bonus Program. Sunsets 6/30/2028. (SD1)

The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.

