THE SENATE
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2026
STATE OF HAWAII

S.B. NO. 2383

JAN 2 1 2026

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO LAW ENFORCEMENT.

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

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that sworn law enforcement personnel of the department of law enforcement perform statewide public safety functions that are essential to the protection of life, property, and the rule of law throughout the State. These functions include providing law enforcement services at the courts, the Hawaii state capitol, airports, and harbors, as well as conducing cyber investigations, agricultural enforcement, fireworks enforcement, warrant service, evictions, and participation in joint state and federal task force operations. The department's responsibilities are specialized, high-risk, and statewide in scope, requiring advanced training, certification, and operational readiness.

The legislature further finds that significant disparities in compensation exist between sworn personnel employed by the department of law enforcement and similarly situated sworn officers employed by county police departments. These disparities have created a persistent and growing gap in pay for

comparable training, certification, risk exposure, and professional responsibility.

The legislature recognizes that the department of law enforcement competes in the same labor market for qualified sworn officers but is constrained by salary structures that are materially lower than those offered by county police departments. As a result, the department faces increasing difficulty in recruiting new officers, retaining experienced personnel, and preventing the loss of trained staff to higher paying law enforcement agencies. This turnover diminishes institutional knowledge, increases overtime and training costs, and weakens the continuity and effectiveness of statewide law enforcement operations.

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

Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to provide a $15,000 retention bonus to all eligible sworn personnel of the department of law enforcement.

SECTION 2. (a) The department of law enforcement shall provide a retention bonus in the amount of $15,000 to all eligible sworn personnel that:

(1) Are employed full-time as sworn law enforcement officers under section 353C-4, Hawaii Revised Statutes, with the department of law enforcement within the preceding fiscal year; and

(2) Completed at least two thousand hours of service, including regular duty hours, approved overtime hours, approved sick leave, and approved vacation leave, during the preceding fiscal year.

(b) The department of law enforcement shall verify eligibility based on payroll, attendance, and leave records for the preceding fiscal year.

(c) The retention bonus authorized by this Act shall be:

(1) Payable on an annual basis for each fiscal year in which an officer meets the eligibility requirements of this section;

(2) Non-recurring; and

(3) Excluded from base compensation for the purposes of future salary, retirement benefit, or other ongoing compensation adjustment calculations, unless otherwise required by law.

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 for payment of retention bonuses required by section 2 of this Act.

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

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

INTRODUCED BY: Carol Fukunaga

S.B. NO. 2383

Report Title:
DLE; Retention Bonus; Appropriation

Description:
Requires the Department of Law Enforcement to provide $15,000 retention bonuses to all eligible sworn law enforcement officers who meet specified requirements. Requires the Department of Law Enforcement to verify eligibility. Appropriates funds for the payment of retention bonuses.

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