



UNITED PUBLIC WORKERS

AFSCME Local 646, AFL-CIO

**THE SENATE
KA 'AHA KENEKOA
THE THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION OF 2026**

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

Monday, April 6, 2026, 10:32 AM
Conference Room 211 & Videoconference

Re: Testimony on HB2315, HD1, SD1 – RELATING TO STATE EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee:

The United Public Workers, AFSCME Local 646, AFL-CIO (“UPW”) is the exclusive bargaining representative for approximately 14,000 public employees, which includes blue collar, non-supervisory employees in Bargaining Unit 1 and institutional, health, and correctional employees in Bargaining Unit 10, in the State of Hawaii and various counties.

UPW **strongly supports** HB2315, HD1, SD1, which authorizes the Department of Health (“DOH”) to establish a vacation payout pilot program in which eligible DOH employees may defer unused vacation leave credits in favor of a pay out to provide home purchase down payment assistance.

For many years, Hawaii has had the distinction of having the highest cost of living in the U.S., based in part on the average price of food, utility, and transportation costs. However, it is widely known that the high cost of housing is the most substantial cost for working families and has become a significant financial burden for hard-working residents who want to remain in Hawaii. As such, one of the greatest barriers to homeownership for our members is access to capital.

The program proposed in the bill, under certain conditions, would provide our Department of Health members with the ability to utilize an accrued vacation time payout for the purchase of a personal residence. We strongly believe that this measure is an excellent example of an employer that is pursuing alternative ways to recruit and retain employees by understanding their needs. We hope that this three-year pilot program is successful and serves as an example for other departments and agencies.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify in support of this measure.

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HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION
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The Thirty-Third Legislature, State of Hawaii
The Senate
Committee on Ways and Means

Testimony by
Hawaii Government Employees Association

April 6, 2026

H.B. 2315, H.D. 1, S.D. 1 — RELATING TO STATE EMPLOYEE BENEFITS.

The Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO supports the concept of H.B. 2315, H.D. 1, S.D. 1, which authorizes the Department of Health to establish a vacation payout pilot project in which eligible Department of Health employees may defer unused vacation leave credits in favor of a pay out to provide home purchase down payment assistance.

Our organization recognizes that our state must explore new and alternative ways to recruit and retain a qualified workforce, especially at a time when government salary and benefits alone may not be enough to be considered an attractive career. With high housing prices, we trust that many of our members cannot afford a downpayment on a single-family home, and we know that this benefit will go a long way in helping members achieve just that. If the implementation and utilization of this pilot program is successful, then it should be expanded to all state employees. Reports indicate that our state's workforce has a 24% vacancy rate and 30% of our current workforce is eligible to retire in the next five years. We appreciate the intent of this measure as it aims to begin a conversation about a unique and generous government benefit, which can help the state to recruit and retain the next generation of public employees.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of H.B. 2315, H.D. 1, S.D. 1.

Respectfully submitted,



Randy Perreira
Executive Director