

**DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS,  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM**  
KA 'OIHANA HO'OMOHALA PĀ'OIHANA, 'IMI WAIWAI  
A HO'OMĀKA'IKA'I

**JOSH GREEN, M.D.**  
GOVERNOR

**SYLVIA LUKE**  
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**JAMES KUNANE TOKIOKA**  
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Statement of  
**JAMES KUNANE TOKIOKA**  
**Director**  
Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism  
before the  
**SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM**

Tuesday, March 17, 2026, 1:00 PM  
State Capitol, Conference Room #229

Providing comments on  
**HB 2411 HD1**  
**RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT,  
AND TOURISM.**

Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai, and Members of the Committee on Economic Development and Tourism: The Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism (DBEDT) submits this testimony with comments on HB2411 HD1, which would establish the Hawai'i Employer-Led Sector Partnerships Special Fund to support employer-led, demand-driven sector partnerships and require coordination to ensure alignment across the State's workforce development system.

DBEDT generally supports the intent of this measure. DBEDT notes that the State has previously supported employer-led sector partnership efforts, including those convened through the Chamber of Commerce Hawai'i (COCH). These sector partnerships have served as a practical template for how employer-driven governance, neutral backbone support, and industry-defined workforce priorities can be effectively organized. The structure reflected in this measure aligns with lessons learned from those efforts and builds upon an existing, proven model rather than creating a new or duplicative workforce program.

Employer-led sector partnerships are a well-established approach for organizing employers within an industry around shared workforce needs and improving alignment between labor market demand, education and training providers, and workforce support systems. When structured appropriately, sector partnerships help move workforce development efforts upstream—toward employer-validated demand signals—rather than relying solely on training supply or program-driven approaches. DBEDT views employer-led sector partnerships as one component of its broader workforce

development pillar under the Department's economic resiliency framework. Sector partnerships are intended to operate upstream, organizing employers, validating demand signals, and identifying shared workforce challenges, while complementing—not replacing—jobseeker-focused programs, education systems, and workforce service delivery administered by partner agencies.

DBEDT notes that Hawai'i already has an existing foundation of employer-led sector partnership activity. Current employer-led sector partnerships include healthcare; clean energy and the skilled trades; creative industries; information technology; engineering; natural resources; and transportation, with additional sectors in development. These partnerships vary in structure and maturity but collectively demonstrate the value of sustained employer convening around workforce challenges that no single firm can address alone. These sector partnerships closely align with DBEDT's targeted economic clusters and priority growth industries, reinforcing the Department's role in connecting economic development strategy with workforce system alignment. By anchoring workforce discussions at the industry level, sector partnerships help ensure that training and pipeline investments are responsive to sectors critical to Hawai'i's long-term economic diversification and resilience.

HB2411 HD1 further clarifies allowable uses of the Special Fund and establishes reporting requirements, providing additional structure and transparency for legislative oversight.

## **Role of coordination within the workforce system**

DBEDT supports the measure's requirement for coordination with the Workforce Development Council (WDC). Coordination is essential to ensure that employer-led sector partnerships complement, rather than duplicate, existing workforce development programs and federal funding streams. DBEDT views sector partnerships as a distinct function within the workforce ecosystem—focused on employer engagement, demand articulation, and industry-level problem solving—rather than as direct service delivery or training programs. Clear coordination roles help preserve this distinction while improving overall system alignment.

## **Implementation considerations regarding the Special Fund**

DBEDT recognizes ongoing public and legislative concerns regarding the use of special funds, particularly during periods of fiscal constraint. In that context, DBEDT offers the following comments to clarify how the proposed Special Fund could be implemented in a focused and accountable manner consistent with the bill's intent.

First, the core function of sector partnerships is convening and coordination. Effective partnerships require neutral backbone support to organize employers, facilitate meetings, synthesize shared workforce needs, and sustain engagement over time. These administrative and convening functions are foundational to the sector partnership

model and are often difficult to support through traditional workforce funding mechanisms, yet are critical to success.

Second, work-based learning and on-the-job training are most effective when they are directly connected to established employer-led pipelines. Sector partnerships provide a mechanism to identify shared hiring needs, validate training pathways, and coordinate employer participation. Targeted support for internships, apprenticeships, and structured OJT linked to these pipelines can help ensure that public investments benefit both participating employers and individuals who complete employer-validated training and transition into employment. DBEDT notes that prior demand-driven workforce initiatives demonstrated the value of aligning funding with clearly defined pathways rather than stand-alone placements.

Third, while education and training alignment may be an outcome of sector partnership activity, DBEDT emphasizes that such efforts should remain employer-driven and narrowly scoped. Where appropriate, limited curriculum or credential alignment may occur in collaboration with the University of Hawai'i system and other postsecondary partners, based on clearly identified employer needs. Sector partnerships are not intended to replace existing education systems or create parallel training infrastructures.

Finally, DBEDT supports maintaining clear accountability and flexibility in the use of the Special Fund, including annual reporting to the Legislature on expenditures, activities supported, and outcomes achieved. Funds would be administered consistent with applicable procurement, contracting, and reporting requirements to ensure transparency and appropriate stewardship of public resources. Emphasizing a small number of meaningful performance indicators—such as employer engagement, participation in pipeline-linked work-based learning, and alignment with priority industry needs—can help ensure transparency while allowing partnerships to evolve as labor market conditions change.

DBEDT appreciates the Legislature's focus on strengthening employer engagement and improving coordination across Hawai'i's workforce development system. With careful implementation, employer-led sector partnerships can serve as a high-leverage mechanism to align public and private investments with real labor market demand while remaining flexible, accountable, and industry-driven.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit this testimony.



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## ‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

### Legislative Testimony

### Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the  
Senate Committee on Economic Development and Tourism  
March 17, 2026 at 1:00 p.m.

By

Debora Halbert  
Vice President for Academic Strategy  
University of Hawai'i System

HB 2411 HD1 – RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND TOURISM.

Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai, and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i (UH) strongly supports HB 2411 HD1 – Relating to the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism. This bill seeks to establish the Hawai'i Employer-Led Sector Partnerships Special Fund within the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism (DBEDT). Doing so would institutionalize the State's existing sector partnerships and provide for expansion into other economic sectors. Sector partnerships are a national best practice in workforce development, facilitating alignment between education and the demands of employers.

UH has been a proud partner in Hawai'i's sector partnerships since their inception in 2017. The UH Community Colleges' Good Jobs Hawai'i federal grants funded the labor market analysis and logistical support for several of our early sector partnerships with the Chamber of Commerce Hawai'i. These partnerships have addressed critical topics such as workforce shortages and the misalignment between industry needs and K-12 and higher education systems. They are employer-led, drawing member business and state agencies into partnerships with school complexes and UH programs, each with action teams focused on solving specific workforce issues (e.g. artificial intelligence literacy in creative industries, female student participation in high school engineering academies, internships in information technology). UH has benefitted tremendously from the State's seven sector partnerships, with faculty and employers working together to align curricula and increase work-based learning opportunities.

UH is committed to continued collaboration with DBEDT, the Workforce Development Council, and other stakeholders to ensure alignment with the State's unified workforce plan and strengthen local talent pipelines. However, with the Good Jobs Hawai'i federal grants coming to an end, the future of our sector partnerships is uncertain. The Hawai'i Employer-Led Sector Partnerships Special Fund would provide stable funding to support these critical initiatives. State funding for such sector partnerships is common with around 22 states providing such support. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of this measure.

**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Economic Development and Tourism  
Senator Lynn DeCoite, Chair  
Senator Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair**

**Tuesday, March 17, 2026, at 1:00PM  
Conference Room 229 & Videoconference**

**RE: HB2411 HD1 Relating to the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism**

My name is Sherry Menor, President and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce Hawaii ("The Chamber"). The Chamber supports House Bill 2411 House Draft 1 (HB2411 HD1), which establishes and appropriates funds into and out of the Hawai'i Employer-Led Sector Partnerships Special Fund. It requires the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism to coordinate its sector partnership activities with the Workforce Development Council.

HB2411 HD1 aligns with our 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii: An Economic Action Plan, specifically under the policy pillar for Economic Action. According to the US Census Bureau, Hawaii lost 11,193 residents due to outward migration in 2023 alone. This bill addresses fundamental issues facing Hawaii's economy: outmigration and limited career opportunity. By building workforce development pathways that are aligned with industry needs, are supported by work-based learning opportunities, and involve our education systems, the state can meet the needs of the student and support them along these intentionally curated workforce pathways.

This method of workforce development goes beyond credentialing and filling internship vacancies, it offers the most efficient method of allocating workforce development effort and monies. It requires industry insight into workforce skill gaps, labor shortages, and misalignment between education systems and industry needs. The Chamber has long championed this method. These returns on investment are significant, as detailed in the attached impact report. With the establishment of a special fund, HB2411 HD1 incentivizes organizations engaged in workforce development to adopt a proven methodology of workforce development that directly contributes towards mitigating outward migration and galvanizing Hawaii's labor market and economy.

For these reasons, the Chamber stands in strong support of House Bill 2411 House Draft 1 and respectfully ask for its passage. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

The Chamber of Commerce Hawaii is the state's leading business advocacy organization, dedicated to improving Hawaii's economy and securing Hawaii's future for growth and opportunity. Our mission is to foster a vibrant economic climate. As such, we support initiatives and policies that align with the 2030



Blueprint for Hawaii that create opportunities to strengthen overall competitiveness, improve the quantity and skills of available workforce, diversify the economy, and build greater local wealth.

## Impact at a Glance

2025

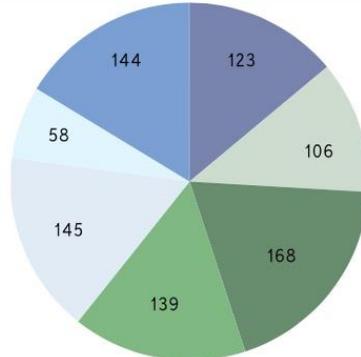


### 883

**EMPLOYERS ENGAGED**

Across 7 Sectors

- Technology
- Creative Industries
- Clean Energy
- Transportation
- Natural Resources
- Engineering
- Healthcare



### Sector Partnership Fund

Launched in May 2025

## \$107,000

Raised in the inaugural year to fuel employer-led workforce initiatives

## 100+

Individual community contributors

### 136+



Educators experienced an educator externship or professional development

SY 24-25

### Hawaii DOE Partner Complexes

Campbell Castle	Pearl City Waianae
Farrington Kapolei	Waipahu
Leilehua	

### 8



SY 24-25

Students, educators, and school staff experienced high-quality work-based learning this past school year

## 2,263

SY 24-25



### 2,265

**Good Jobs Placements**

(Jan 2021 - Dec 2025)





## **TESTIMONY from Kupu on HB2411 Relating to the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism**

Aloha e Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Keone Nakoa, and I am the Vice President of External Affairs at Kupu. Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of Kupu in **support of HB2411 HD1 with one technical amendment**.

Kupu is a statewide nonprofit organization based here in Hawai'i that focuses on creating programs that empower youth and young adults with opportunities to learn, serve, and work in ways that restore environments and communities. Our programs seek to build a local workforce that is prepared to address Hawai'i's unique challenges, and create community-specific solutions. As an organization that helps people transform their love for the environment into a professional career, we have been proud to provide guidance and support for the Natural Resources Sector Partnership (NRSP) since its launch in October 2022. Since then, the NRSP and Kupu have published a report on the status of natural resources careers in Hawai'i, promoted natural resources career pathways in our local schools, and helped to establish a new Associate in Science (Natural Sciences) degree with a concentration in Natural Resources and Environmental Management (NREM) offered at all community colleges in the UH system.

HB2411 HD1 establishes the Hawai'i Employer-Led Sector Partnerships Special Fund within DBEDT to provide stable, ongoing support for employer-driven partnerships that organize employer engagement, identify real-time skill needs, align education and training systems with actual labor-market demand in the state's priority industries, and coordinate with the Workforce Development Council (WDC) to ensure alignment with the State's unified workforce plan.

Hawai'i's long-term economic competitiveness depends on a skilled, adaptable, and locally trained workforce. Employer-led sector partnerships strengthen the workforce ecosystem by improving program alignment with industry needs, supporting worker retention and advancement, and reducing reliance on out-of-state recruitment. These partnerships convene employers, education providers, workforce agencies, the Workforce Development Council, and community organizations to identify in-demand skills, shape curriculum, and develop work-based learning opportunities such as internships and

apprenticeships. By coordinating statewide through the WDC, sector partnerships ensure alignment with the state's unified workforce plan, reduce duplication, and generate outcomes that directly respond to labor-market demand.

HB2411's special fund structure maximizes return on public investment by leveraging federal and private resources, providing consistent funding, and supporting ongoing coordination that cannot be sustained through one-time appropriations. By investing in employer-led sector partnerships, the state strengthens local talent pipelines, enhances workforce readiness, and fosters economic resilience. These strategic investments reduce future recruitment costs, improve worker retention, and help Hawaii maintain a competitive, sustainable, and future-ready economy across all priority industries.

Lastly, Kupu would like to flag for the Committee a minor correction in the findings section of the bill. On page 1, line 14, the legislature notes the Chamber of Commerce Hawaii's efforts have grown into "six active, employer-led" collaboratives. The current number should be "seven" active sector partnerships which consist of clean energy, creative industries, engineering, health care, information technology, natural resources, and transportation.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask this Committee to **PASS House Bill 2411**. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Keone Nakoa  
Vice President of External Affairs, Kupu



TESTIMONY OF DAVE ERDMAN  
INTERIM PRESIDENT & CEO  
RETAIL MERCHANTS OF HAWAI'I

**IN SUPPORT OF HB 2411 HD1 – RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS,  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND TOURISM**

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

Tuesday, March 17, 2026  
1:00 PM Conference Room 229

Aloha Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Dave Erdman, and I serve as Interim President and CEO of Retail Merchants of Hawai'i (RMH), a statewide nonprofit trade association representing retailers, shopping centers, restaurants in retail centers, and allied businesses across the islands.

**RMH supports HB 2411 HD1**, which establishes the Hawai'i Employer-Led Sector Partnerships Special Fund within the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism (DBEDT) to strengthen employer-led workforce sector partnerships.

Retailers and our allied logistics partners across Hawai'i depend on a stable, well-prepared workforce and strong collaboration between industry, education, and workforce development partners. Employer-led sector partnerships provide a practical framework for businesses to work collectively with education and training providers to better align workforce preparation with real labor market demand.

For many employers, particularly in retail and service-related sectors, workforce challenges often extend beyond the capacity of any single business to solve alone. Sector partnerships create a structure for employers to identify shared workforce needs, communicate those needs clearly to education and training institutions, and help shape programs that prepare residents for meaningful career opportunities.

RMH also recognizes the important role that these partnerships can play in strengthening Hawai'i's long-term economic resilience. By helping to align workforce development efforts with key industry sectors, this approach supports economic diversification while also creating clearer career pathways for students and job seekers.

Retail Merchants of Hawaii is also supportive of the broader policy direction reflected in the Chamber of Commerce Hawai'i's 2030 Blueprint for Hawai'i, which emphasizes employer-driven workforce development strategies as an important component of improving economic opportunity and addressing workforce shortages across the state.

Ensuring that sector partnerships remain employer-led, coordinated with the Workforce Development Council, and implemented with appropriate transparency and accountability will help maximize the effectiveness of this model.

Retail Merchants of Hawai'i appreciates the Legislature's focus on strengthening workforce alignment and employer engagement within Hawai'i's economic development strategy. Measures such as HB 2411 HD1 can help better connect industry needs, workforce training, and long-term economic growth.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony **in support of this measure.**



**Hawaiian  
Electric**

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM**

**HB 2411, HD1**

**Relating to the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism**

Tuesday, March 17, 2026

1:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 229 & Videoconference

Dear Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai, and Members of the Committee,

Hawaiian Electric is submitting written testimony in **support** of HB 2411, HD1, Relating to the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism.

HB2411, HD1 provides the stable, ongoing support needed for employer-driven sector partnerships to organize industry engagement, identify real-time skill needs, align education and training systems with labor-market demand, and coordinate with the Workforce Development Council to support the state's unified workforce plan. These partnerships are essential in Hawaii's priority industries and play a crucial role in building a resilient, future-ready workforce.

Sector partnerships are one of the most effective ways to create clear, sustainable pathways from education to career. The internships, work-based learning opportunities, and hands-on experiences they offer help students understand career options, develop relevant skills, and stay engaged in Hawaii's economy. Expanding and stabilizing funding will allow more schools to collaborate with industry partners, strengthening local talent pipelines and creating viable pathways to living-wage employment for our residents and keep local talent in Hawaii.

Hawaii's long-term economic competitiveness depends on a skilled, adaptable, and locally trained workforce. Employer-led sector partnerships support this goal by improving program alignment with actual industry needs, enhancing worker retention and advancement, and reducing reliance on out-of-state recruitment. These partnerships bring together employers, education providers, workforce agencies, the Workforce Development Council, and community organizations to identify in-demand skills, shape curriculum, and expand opportunities such as internships and apprenticeships. Coordinated statewide through the WDC, they reduce duplication and generate workforce outcomes that directly reflect labor-market realities.

The special fund established by HB 2411, HD1 will maximize the impact of public investment by leveraging federal and private resources, ensuring consistent funding, and enabling long-term coordination that cannot be maintained through one-time appropriations. Investing in employer-led sector partnerships strengthens Hawaii's talent pipelines, improves workforce readiness, and increases economic resilience across all priority industries. These strategic investments reduce recruitment costs, improve retention, and help ensure Hawaii's economy remains competitive and sustainable.

For these reasons, Hawaiian Electric **supports** HB 2411, HD1. Mahalo for the opportunity to submit written testimony.



March 13, 2026

Senator Lynn DeCoite, Chair  
Senator Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair  
Committee on Economic Development and Tourism  
Hawaii State Legislature

**SUPPORT FOR HB2411 HD1**

Dear Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai and Members of the Senate Committee on Economic Development and Tourism,

On behalf of the Kohala Coast Resort Association (KCRA) thank you for providing us with the opportunity to provide our SUPPORT of HB2411 HD1.

With the State of Hawaii projected to see a 33% drop in the number of high school graduates during the next 15 years, we believe there needs to be strong investment in workforce development partnerships.

Kohala Coast Resort Association has been participating in efforts led by Hawaii County's Department of Research and Development, with the ClimbHI / LEI program, with the academies at Honokaa and Kealahou High Schools, and with Hawaii Community College's Palamanui Campus and Ko Education Center.

We urge you to continue to move this important legislation forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephanie P. Donoho". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Stephanie Donoho, Administrative Director, Kohala Coast Resort Association

Craig Anderson, Mauna Kea Resort –President  
Charlie Parker, Four Seasons Hualalai – Vice President  
Mark Goldrup, Waikoloa Beach Marriott – Secretary  
Pete Alles, Mauna Lani, Auberge Resorts Collection – Treasurer  
Pat Fitzgerald, Mauna Lani and Hualalai Resorts – Board of Directors  
Daniel Scott, Rosewood Kona Village – Board of Directors  
Samantha Jones, Fairmont Orchid – Board of Directors  
Scott Head, Waikoloa Land Company – Board of Directors  
Nick Kuhns, Hilton Waikoloa Village – Board of Directors  
Rob Gunthner, Hilton Grand Vacations – Board of Directors

**TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL NO 2411 HD1, RELATING TO  
THE DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND TOURISM**

Position: **Support**

To Senator Lynn DeCoite, Chair; Senator Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair; and Members of the Committee on Economic Development & Tourism

Please accept this testimony in **strong support** of this bill which establishes the Hawaii Employer-Led Sector Partnerships Special Fund within DBEDT to provide stable, ongoing support for employer-driven partnerships that organize employer engagement, identify real-time skill needs, align education and training systems with actual labor-market demand in the state's priority industries, and coordinate with the Workforce Development Council to ensure alignment with the state's unified workforce plan.

Simonpietri Enterprises LLC is an O'ahu-based small business developing innovative ways to recycle waste generated in Hawai'i into renewable fuels and other beneficial recycled-material products for use in Hawai'i. As a small business, such funding can have a profound impact on our hiring abilities. With The Hawaii Employer-Led Sector Partnerships Special Fund as we were able to hire 5 student interns over the last 2 years for paid STEM internships and help train future skilled workers.

Hawaii's long-term economic competitiveness depends on a skilled, adaptable, and locally trained workforce. Employer-led sector partnerships strengthen the workforce ecosystem by improving program alignment with industry needs, supporting worker retention and advancement, and reducing reliance on out-of-state recruitment. These partnerships convene employers, education providers, workforce agencies, the Workforce Development Council (WDC), and community organizations to identify in-demand skills, shape curriculum, and develop work-based learning opportunities such as internships and apprenticeships. By coordinating statewide through the WDC, sector partnerships ensure alignment with the state's unified workforce plan, reduce duplication, and generate outcomes that directly respond to labor-market demand.

HB2411's special fund structure maximizes return on public investment by leveraging federal and private resources, providing consistent funding, and supporting ongoing coordination that cannot be sustained through one-time appropriations. By investing in employer-led sector partnerships, the state strengthens local talent pipelines, enhances workforce readiness, and fosters economic resilience. These strategic investments reduce future recruitment costs, improve worker retention, and help Hawaii maintain a competitive, sustainable, and future-ready economy across all priority industries.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask to **PASS House Bill 2411**. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,



Marie-Joelle Simonpietri  
President

*About Simonpietri Enterprises LLC*

Simonpietri Enterprises is a Kailua, Hawaii-based woman- and veteran-owned small business with ten employees, focused on technical innovation and first-of-kind project development of emerging clean and renewable technologies. Since founding in 2006, we have helped dozens of small and large industrial companies in Hawaii, the continental U.S., Australia, and Canada improve the environmental and economic sustainability of their operations through technical and business advice in renewable energy conversion, waste reduction and re-use, and greenhouse gas lifecycle impact reduction. Simonpietri Enterprises' founder and employees have participated in the strategy, planning, design, financing, development, construction, and energy efficiency/greenhouse gas reduction/sustainability renovation for over \$400 million in new renewable and first-of-kind sustainable fuel projects over the past 15 years. Since launching the Aloha Carbon waste-to-fuel technical development process in August 2020, Simonpietri Enterprises is now developing renewable fuel production facilities in its own right, starting with the Aloha Sustainable Materials Recycling and Fertilizer Facility (SMRFF) in Kapolei, Hawaii to divert wastes generated in Honolulu from landfilling and transform it to renewable fuel, organic fertilizer, and recycled-material building products.



**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM**

**IBEW LOCAL 1260 — TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB2411 HD1  
EDT Hearing — Tuesday, March 17, 2026 — 1:00 PM**

Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai, and Members of the Committee,

IBEW Local 1260 submits testimony in **strong support** of HB2411 HD1.

This measure recognizes that Hawai'i's long-term economic competitiveness depends on a skilled, locally trained workforce aligned with real-time industry demand and supports employer-led sector partnerships that coordinate employers, education, and workforce systems to close skill gaps and strengthen workforce readiness.

HB2411 HD1 establishes a Hawai'i Employer-Led Sector Partnerships Special Fund within DBEDT to provide stable and diversified funding for these partnerships, rather than relying on one-time appropriations that cannot sustain long-term workforce pipeline development.

The bill appropriately allows funding to support workforce pipeline activities including curriculum development, credentialing, internships, apprenticeships, work-based learning, labor-market data analysis, and industry partnership coordination. These are exactly the types of investments needed to build and retain a strong local workforce and reduce reliance on out-of-state recruitment.

From the perspective of IBEW 1260 members, employer-driven workforce partnerships help ensure training programs reflect actual industry needs, support worker advancement and retention, and strengthen pathways into high-skill, family-sustaining careers in Hawai'i.

IBEW 1260 supports the bill's requirement for coordination with the Workforce Development Council and statewide workforce planning efforts to ensure alignment and avoid duplication of services while strengthening workforce outcomes statewide.

IBEW 1260 respectfully urges the Committee to pass HB2411 HD1.





**MAUI**  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
VOICE OF BUSINESS

**HEARING BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM  
HAWAII STATE CAPITOL, SENATE CONFERENCE ROOM 229  
TUESDAY, MARCH 17, 2026 AT 1:00 P.M.**

To The Honorable Senator Lynn DeCoite, Chair  
The Honorable Senator Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair  
Members of the Committee on Economic Development & Tourism

**SUPPORT FOR HB2411 HD1 RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS,  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND TOURISM**

The Maui Chamber of Commerce recognizes the importance of initiatives that strengthen local industries and workforce capacity. We support HB2411 HD1, which establishes and appropriates funds for the Hawai'i Employer-Led Sector Partnerships Special Fund, supporting long-term economic resilience.

This measure's focus on employer-led sector partnerships aligns with best practices in workforce development, where collaboration between employers, government, and education providers leads to more responsive training and job placement. By coordinating activities between the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism (DBEDT) and the Workforce Development Council, the bill encourages a more strategic approach to addressing current and future labor market needs.

Mahalo for the opportunity to share our support of HB2411 HD1.

Sincerely,

Pamela Tumpap  
President

To advance and promote a healthy economic environment for business, advocating for a responsive government and quality education, while preserving Maui's unique community characteristics.



# Hawai'i Island Chamber of Commerce

1321 Kino'ole Street - Hilo, Hawai'i 96720

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Carla Kuo

2025-2026

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Dean Fuke

Larisa Hamamoto

Dayna Kawazoe

Daniel Kea

Randy Kurohara

Geoli Ng

Matthew Pickett

James Staub

Jase Takeya

Nimr Tamimi

Jennifer Tobey

Joni Waltjen

Irene Yamanaka

Tracie Yoshimoto

## Testimony to the Senate Committee on Economic Development & Tourism

Senator Lynn DeCoite, Chair  
Senator Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair

Tuesday, March 17, 2026 at 1:00 PM

**LATE**

### RE: HB2411 HD1 Relating to the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism - SUPPORT

Aloha e Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii Island Chamber of Commerce, representing more than 350 businesses and individual members primarily on the east side of Hawai'i Island, supports House Bill 2411 House Draft 1, which establishes the Hawai'i Employer-Led Sector Partnerships Special Fund within the Hawaii Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism to provide stable support for employer-driven workforce partnerships.

Hawai'i continues to face long-term economic challenges. According to the February 2026 *Beyond the Price of Paradise* by the University of Hawai'i Economic Research Organization, income and productivity growth in the state have lagged the national average. One contributing factor is the persistent gap between workforce skills and employer needs.

Employer-led sector partnerships help address this challenge by bringing together businesses, educators, and workforce agencies to align training programs with real-time industry demand. This approach strengthens local talent pipelines, expands career pathways, and better prepares residents for high-demand jobs.

HB2411 HD1 would provide stable funding to sustain and expand these partnerships, particularly as several federally funded workforce initiatives approach the end of their funding cycles. A dedicated special fund will help maintain coordination, leverage federal and private resources, and support long-term workforce development aligned with Hawai'i's economic priorities.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the Legislature to **pass HB2411 HD1**. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,

Carla Kuo  
Executive Officer  
Hawai'i Island Chamber of Commerce



**LATE**

Statement of  
**Hermann Kugeler**  
Vice President of Business Development  
Makai Ocean Engineering, Inc.

before the

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM**

Tuesday, March 17, 2026

1:00 pm

In consideration of

**HB2411**

**RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT,  
AND TOURISM.**

Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai, and Members of the Committee

Makai Ocean Engineering, Inc. (Makai) **SUPPORTS HB2411** that Establishes and appropriates funds into and out of the Hawai'i Employer-Led Sector Partnerships Special Fund. Makai supports this measure because Hawaii's long-term economic competitiveness depends on strong partnerships between employers, education and training providers, and workforce organizations to ensure that students and workers are being prepared for real industry needs.

Makai is a locally owned engineering and technology company that has been based in Hawaii for over 50 years. During that time, Makai has developed advanced technologies in ocean engineering, energy, manufacturing, and subsea systems while creating high-skilled technical and engineering jobs in the State.

Makai strongly believes in employer-led workforce development. Employers are in the best position to help identify real-world skill needs, define the types of jobs that are in demand, and work with educators and training providers to better prepare students for those opportunities. Makai has worked directly with the University of Hawaii for many years in support of this kind of workforce development. That support has included guest lectures, collaboration with local programs, and internship opportunities for Hawaii students. These efforts help expose students to real engineering and tech challenges while also building a stronger local workforce pipeline.

Makai appreciates that HB2411 is focused not only on general workforce development, but specifically on employer-led and demand-driven sector partnerships. The bill recognizes the importance of aligning curriculum, credentialing, internships, apprenticeships, and other work-based learning opportunities with actual industry demand. It also allows support for coordination, technical assistance, labor-market analysis, and partnerships with educational institutions, industry groups, and other public and private entities.



From Makai’s perspective, this kind of structure is important. Hawaii businesses often face challenges finding and retaining locally trained talent in technical fields. Stronger collaboration between employers and institutions like the University of Hawaii can help students better understand career opportunities here at home, while helping employers build a workforce that is better aligned with industry needs. Over time, this can reduce reliance on out-of-state recruitment and strengthen Hawaii’s innovation economy. The bill’s findings also recognize these broader benefits, including improved retention of local workers and stronger local talent pipelines.

For these reasons, Makai Ocean Engineering supports HB2411 and respectfully asks the committee to pass this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.

Testimony of  
Joy Barua

**LATE**

Before:

The Senate Committee on Economic Development and Tourism  
The Honorable Senator Lynn DeCoite, Chair  
The Honorable Senator Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair

Tuesday, March 17, 2026  
1:00 p.m.  
Conference Room 229 & via Videoconference

**RE: HB2411 HD1 Relating to the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism**

Aloha e Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Joy Barua, and I serve on the 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii's Economic Action Committee of the Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii. I am providing testimony in my personal capacity. My comments reflect my own views and are informed by discussions within the Blueprint policy committee.

I am writing in **SUPPORT of House Bill 2411 House Draft 1 (HB2411 HD1)**, which establishes the Hawaii Employer-Led Sector Partnerships Special Fund within Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism (DBEDT) to provide stable, ongoing support for employer-driven partnerships that organize employer engagement, identify real-time skill needs, align education and training systems with actual labor-market demand in the state's priority industries, and coordinate with the Workforce Development Council to ensure alignment with the state's unified workforce plan.

Hawaii's economic challenges extend beyond its high cost of living. The University of Hawaii Economic Research Organization notes in its February 2026 *Beyond the Price of Paradise* report that, even after adjusting for local prices, the state's income and productivity growth have consistently lagged the national average. This long-term stagnation has limited upward mobility, weakened purchasing power, and contributed to continued outmigration. One contributing factor is the persistent misalignment between workforce skills and employer needs.

Sector Partnerships help close this gap by bringing together employers, educators, and workforce agencies to align training programs with real-time industry demand. This employer-led model ensures workforce programs prepare residents for high-demand occupations while creating clearer pathways to higher-paying jobs.

HB2411 HD1 aligns with the workforce development pillar of the 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii, which prioritizes Economic Action and stronger education-to-career pathways and closer coordination between industry and training providers. It also complements the State's job placement initiatives, such as Here Imua, by expanding the network of employers already participating in the state's seven sector partnerships and creating additional pathways for job seekers to connect with industry opportunities.

Importantly, this measure comes at a time when several federally supported workforce initiatives are approaching the end of their funding cycles. Programs such as the Good Jobs Hawaii initiative have played a significant role in supporting sector-based workforce training, but long-term sustainability will require stable state-level coordination and employer engagement. Establishing a dedicated funding structure for Sector Partnerships helps maintain this momentum while reducing reliance on uncertain federal funding streams.

With consistent resources, these partnerships can better align education and training programs with Hawaii's evolving industry needs, expand internships and apprenticeships, and strengthen local talent pipelines. The special fund structure also amplifies public benefit by leveraging federal and private resources while sustaining the coordination needed for long-term workforce development.

By strengthening workforce readiness, supporting business growth, and connecting job seekers to employer-led training and placement pathways, HB2411 HD1 advances productivity, economic mobility, and long-term competitiveness across Hawaii's economy.

For these reasons, I respectfully request your support. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,



Joy Barua  
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