



**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**  
LT. GOVERNOR

**JAMES KUNANE TOKIOKA**  
DIRECTOR

**DANE K. WICKER**  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

No. 1 Capitol District Building, 250 South Hotel Street, 5th Floor, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813  
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 2359, Honolulu, Hawaii 96804  
Web site: [dbedt.hawaii.gov](http://dbedt.hawaii.gov)

Telephone: (808) 586-2355  
Fax: (808) 586-2377

Statement of  
**JAMES KUNANE TOKIOKA**  
**Director**  
Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism  
before the  
**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE**

Monday, March 2, 2026, 2:00 PM  
State Capitol, Conference Room #308

In support of  
**HB 2411 HD1**  
**RELATING TO RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT, AND TOURISM.**

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee on Finance: 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  
House Committee on Finance  
March 2, 2026 at 2:00 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 Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, 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 House Committee on Finance  
Representative Chris Todd, Chair  
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair**

**Monday, March 2, 2026, at 2:00PM  
Conference Room 308 & Videoconference**

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

Aloha e Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

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

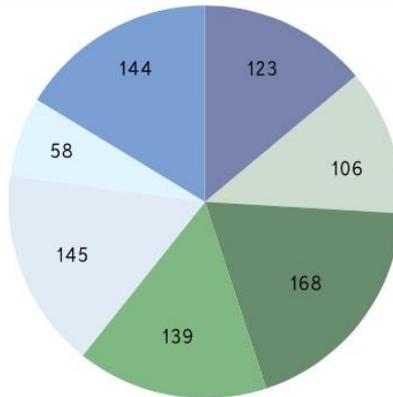


### 883

**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	Pearl City
Castle	Waianae
Farrington	Waipahu
Kapolei	
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)



**HB-2411-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/2/2026 11:30:14 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/2/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Ashton Cudjoe	Hawaii Medical College	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB2411 HD1.

Hawaii Medical College supports the establishment of the Hawaii Employer-Led Sector Partnerships Special Fund and the State’s efforts to strengthen alignment between industry demand and workforce training programs. Employer-informed workforce development is essential to addressing Hawaii’s critical shortages in healthcare, administrative services, and other priority sectors.

As a locally based institution focused exclusively on career education, we serve working adults and nontraditional students seeking direct pathways into employment. Our programs are built in collaboration with employers and aligned to industry-recognized credentials and measurable job outcomes. We have seen firsthand that when employers help define competencies and hiring expectations, students benefit through clearer pathways, stronger work-based learning opportunities, and improved retention in the workforce.

We particularly support the bill’s emphasis on performance measurement, labor-market alignment, and accountability. Workforce investments should be tied to tangible outcomes such as completion, credential attainment, employment placement, and long-term career advancement.

As this measure moves forward, we respectfully encourage implementation that ensures equitable participation among all qualified education and training providers—public and private alike. Hawaii’s workforce ecosystem includes institutions that serve different student populations with varying needs, schedules, and career timelines. Broad inclusion will maximize innovation, responsiveness, and access, particularly for working adults who require flexible, accelerated, and career-focused training options.

Employer-led sector partnerships have the potential to reduce reliance on out-of-state recruitment and strengthen local talent pipelines. By ensuring that all effective training providers have a meaningful opportunity to contribute, the State can fully leverage existing capacity and accelerate workforce outcomes.

Mahalo for your leadership on this important initiative. We respectfully urge your support for HB2411 HD1.

Sincerely,  
Ashton Cudjoe  
President & CEO  
Hawaii Medical College  
[ashton@hmi.edu](mailto:ashton@hmi.edu)



## TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

### **IBEW LOCAL 1260 — TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT TO HB2411 HD1 FIN Hearing — Monday, March 2, 2026 — 2:00 PM**

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, 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.





**Hawaiian  
Electric**

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE**

**HB 2411, HD1**

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

Monday, March 2, 2026

2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 308 & Videoconference

Dear Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, 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.



TESTIMONY OF DAVE ERDMAN  
INTERIM PRESIDENT & CEO  
RETAIL MERCHANTS OF HAWAII

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

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

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

**Retail Merchants of Hawai‘i supports HB 2411 HD1**, which establishes the Hawai‘i Employer-Led Sector Partnerships Special Fund to support employer-led workforce partnerships aligned with real industry needs.

Workforce availability continues to be one of the most significant challenges facing retailers and other local businesses across Hawai‘i. Many employers operate multiple locations across the state and continue to face difficulty recruiting and retaining qualified workers. Strengthening Hawai‘i’s workforce pipeline is essential to maintaining healthy local businesses and a resilient economy.

Employer-led sector partnerships provide a practical approach to improving coordination between businesses, educators, and workforce programs. These partnerships help ensure that training opportunities reflect real employment needs and create clearer pathways for local residents to enter and advance in the workforce.

This measure is consistent with the goals of the Chamber of Commerce Hawaii 2030 Blueprint for Hawai‘i, which emphasizes strengthening workforce development, supporting economic diversification, and improving long-term economic competitiveness. A coordinated and employer-driven approach helps ensure that workforce investments deliver meaningful results for both businesses and workers.

Retail Merchants of Hawai‘i supports HB 2411 HD1 because it helps build a stronger locally trained workforce, reduces reliance on out-of-state recruitment, and supports long-term economic stability for Hawai‘i’s business community.

A reliable workforce is essential for retailers serving communities across the state. Investments in workforce partnerships help local businesses grow while providing meaningful employment opportunities for Hawai'i residents.

Retail Merchants of Hawai'i respectfully urges the Committee to pass HB 2411 HD1.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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

Position: **Support**

To Representative Chris Todd, Chair; Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair; and Members of the Committee:

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 HD1**. 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.



February 28, 2026

Representative Chris Todd, Chair  
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Finance  
Hawaii State Legislature

**Support for HB2411 HD1**

Dear Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi and Members of the House Committee on Finance,

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 in Honokaa.

Finding solutions will require additional investment and partnership and we respectfully urge your committee to pass HB2411 HD1.

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, Auberge Resorts Collection – Treasurer  
Pat Fitzgerald, Hualalai Investors – 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



# Hawai'i Island Chamber of Commerce

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

Phone (808) 935-7178 - Fax (808) 961-4435 - Email [exec@hicc.biz](mailto:exec@hicc.biz) - [www.hicc.biz](http://www.hicc.biz)

## Executive Officer

Carla Kuo

2025-2026

## Board of Directors

### President

David Kurohara

### President-Elect

Dennis Lin

### Vice President

Bonnie Irwin

### Treasurer

Joshua Vierra

### Immediate Past

#### President

Keith Marrack

### Directors

Mary Begier

Vanessa Carlson

Rebecca Choi

Jeremy Chong

Chelsey Chow

Mark Chun

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 House Committee on Finance  
Representative Chris Todd, Chair  
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

Monday, March 2, 2026 at 2:00 PM

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

Aloha e Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawai'i Island Chamber of Commerce, representing more than 350 businesses and individual members primarily on the east side of Hawai'i Island, **supports HB2411 HD1**, 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.

The 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii identifies workforce development as foundational to long-term economic competitiveness. HB2411 HD1 advances that strategy by establishing dedicated funding to sustain employer engagement and cross-sector coordination through Sector Partnerships. The special fund structure enables long-term planning, leverages federal and private resources, and supports the sustained collaboration needed to align training with real-time industry demand.

The recent UHERO report, "Beyond the Price of Paradise: Is Hawai'i Being Left Behind?" makes clear that Hawaii's economic challenges are not simply about high costs. After adjusting for local prices, the report shows that our income and productivity growth have trailed the national average for decades. This long-term stagnation has weakened purchasing power, limited upward mobility, and contributed to sustained outmigration. Reversing this trend requires more than cost relief, it requires stronger wage growth driven by higher productivity.

Improved workforce alignment, guided by employer demand, is central to that solution. When employers cannot find locally trained talent with in-demand skills, growth slows, innovation lags, and businesses look elsewhere. Employer-led sector partnerships directly address this gap by convening employers, educators, workforce agencies, and community organizations to shape curriculum, expand internships and apprenticeships, and ensure training investments reflect real-time labor market needs.

By strengthening local talent pipelines, improving workforce readiness, and reducing reliance on out-of-state recruitment, HB2411 HD1 supports the productivity and income growth UHERO identifies as critical to Hawaii's economic future.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask to PASS House Bill 2411 House Draft 1. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,

Carla Kuo  
Executive Officer  
Hawai'i Island Chamber of Commerce

**Testimony to the House Committee on Finance  
Representative Chris Todd, Chair  
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair**

**Monday, March 2, 2026, at 2:00 PM  
Conference Room 308 & Videoconference**

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

Aloha e Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Monty Pereira, General Manager and Head of Sales and Marketing at Watanabe Floral, Inc. 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 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.

The 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii identifies workforce development as foundational to long-term economic competitiveness. HB2411 HD1 advances that strategy by establishing dedicated funding to sustain employer engagement and cross-sector coordination through Sector Partnerships. The special fund structure enables long-term planning, leverages federal and private resources, and supports the sustained collaboration needed to align training with real-time industry demand.

The recent UHERO report, "*Beyond the Price of Paradise: Is Hawai'i Being Left Behind?*" makes clear that Hawaii's economic challenges are not simply about high costs. After adjusting for local prices, the report shows that our income and productivity growth have trailed the national average for decades. This long-term stagnation has weakened purchasing power, limited upward mobility, and contributed to sustained outmigration. Reversing this trend requires more than cost relief, it requires stronger wage growth driven by higher productivity.

Improved workforce alignment, guided by employer demand, is central to that solution. When employers cannot find locally trained talent with in-demand skills, growth slows, innovation lags, and businesses look elsewhere. Employer-led sector partnerships directly address this gap by convening employers, educators, workforce agencies, and community organizations to shape curriculum, expand internships and apprenticeships, and ensure training investments reflect real-time labor market needs.

By strengthening local talent pipelines, improving workforce readiness, and reducing reliance on out-of-state recruitment, HB2411 HD1 supports the productivity and income growth UHERO identifies as critical to Hawaii's economic future.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask to **PASS House Bill 2411 House Draft 1**. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

**Testimony to the House Committee on Finance  
Representative Chris Todd, Chair  
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair**

**Monday, March 2, 2026, at 2:00 PM  
Conference Room 308 & Videoconference**

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

Aloha e Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

My name is **Stephen Sasaki, Owner of SACK DEFENSE LLC**. 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 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.

Employer-led sector partnerships have already demonstrated value by convening employers, educators, workforce agencies, and community partners to shape curriculum, expand work-based learning, and ensure training investments reflect industry needs. The special fund strengthens this work by enabling long-term planning, leveraging federal and private resources, and sustaining the coordination required to build a resilient workforce ecosystem.

Hawai'i's strategic position in the Indo-Pacific also creates emerging opportunities in sectors tied to regional resilience, defense sustainment, dual-use logistics, and industrial base modernization. These fields increasingly require skills in areas such as autonomous systems, advanced manufacturing, robotics, energy and water resilience, and digital infrastructure. Federal policy and Indo-Pacific regional demand are accelerating growth in these areas, and employer-led partnerships are essential to ensure Hawai'i residents can access these high-skill, high-wage opportunities.

Strengthening local talent pipelines, improving workforce readiness, and reducing reliance on out-of-state recruitment are essential to reversing long-term economic stagnation and supporting upward mobility for Hawai'i residents. HB2411 HD1 ensures that employer-led partnerships—across both established and emerging industries—have the consistent support needed to prepare residents for future-focused careers that align with Hawai'i's economic and strategic priorities.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to PASS HB2411 HD1. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Stephen Sasaki

Honolulu, Hawai'i

**HB-2411-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/2/2026 11:38:11 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/2/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Anna Kelly	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Anna Kelly, President and CEO of AE Consulting. I am testifying in SUPPORT of House Bill 2411 (HB2411), which establishes the Hawai‘i Employer-Led Sector Partnerships Special Fund within DBEDT.

The problem:

- AE has conducted many of the state’s industry workforce analyses, and we know that Hawai‘i is facing critical workforce shortages in sectors like healthcare and skilled trades that are key to Hawai‘i’s economic future.
- We also know that outmigration data shows that working age Hawai‘i residents — particularly early to mid-career residents —are leaving the state at higher rates than the rest of the population.
- This means current workforce shortages will continue to worsen.
- These are huge challenges that no single organization can address alone.

Value of Sector Partnerships:

- Sector partnerships are a unique mechanism for employers, education and training providers, and government and community partners to co-create innovative solutions to our workforce challenges, reducing duplication of work and improving coordination of our efforts.
- As a best practice, Hawai‘i’s sector partnerships are data-driven and center employers, ensuring responsiveness to current industry needs.
- While each sector has its own specific workforce needs, there are also many challenges that employers across sectors are facing – especially when it comes to transferable, durable skills. Sector partnerships foster collaboration across sectors to share strategies and develop solutions for these shared challenges.

- Sector partnerships ultimately benefit all employers in the state — **and the state's economy as a whole** — by cultivating our local talent pipelines and creating new pathways for residents into jobs that Hawai'i needs.
- Best practice nationwide in bridging the gap between education and industry.
- Helping young people and professionals envision a future for themselves in the state.

**Sustainable sources of funding for this work are critical for continued and expanded success and should be prioritized by the state.**

A comprehensive statewide workforce strategy is essential for us to overcome the current and future shortages in key sectors. These shortages are worsening as we lose working-age residents to the mainland. *"Residents aged 18-24 comprise only 7.1% of the population but account for 21.2% of out-migrants. Those aged 25-34 represent 12.6% of residents, yet account for 21.4% of departures."* Workforce Implications of Hawai'i's Out-migration Trends, December 2025, AE Consulting, p. 5, <https://tinyurl.com/AEOutmigration>.

We need to be working in unison towards a collective goal to ensure efficiency, alignment, and success. Sector Partnerships are one of the best mechanisms for doing this, and the state should fund and support this work directly.

Sophie Moser  
92-1770 Kunia Road  
Kunia Camp, HI 96759  
sophie.moser@agstewardshiphawaii.org

March 2, 2026

Aloha e Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the House Committee on Finance,

### **Re: Testimony in Support of HB1953, Relating to Agriculture**

Please accept this testimony in strong support of HB1953/SB3296, Relating to Agriculture. This bill establishes a pilot program to provide coordinated training, technical assistance, cost-share opportunities, and on-farm infrastructure support across Hawai'i. By doing so, the State has an opportunity to step directly into the field alongside agricultural producers, sharing the cost of conservation investments that benefit the entire community.

HB1953 establishes a pilot program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (DAB) to provide:

- Training and technical assistance
- Cost-share support for conservation practices
- On-farm infrastructure funding, such as compost systems and irrigation improvements

By filling gaps in existing programs, this bill supports small, diversified farms and 'āina-based stewardship practices often underserved by federal initiatives.

### **Why It Matters**

- **Tailored support:** Provides targeted assistance to farms and 'āina-based stewardship groups often underserved by federal programs, modeled on successful cost-share initiatives.
- **Supports farmers facing growing pressures:** Helps producers address climate change, soil degradation, water constraints, and rising costs that threaten working lands providing critical public benefits.
- **Efficient, proven model:** Builds on a high-functioning DAB partnership program, Da Bux, leveraging a qualified nonprofit partner's networks for accountable implementation while complementing existing state efforts.
- **Tangible outcomes:** Faster adoption of conservation practices, improved soil health and water retention, stronger farm-level planning, and measurable climate resilience gains.

This bill is a practical, evidence-based approach to supporting Hawai'i's working lands today. We cannot wait for long-term institutional reforms before assisting the farmers who feed our communities.

Mahalo for your leadership and consideration,

Sophie Moser  
sophie.moser@agstewardshiphawaii.org  
805-798-0160