



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 Economic Development & Technology
February 11, 2026 at 8:30 a.m.

By

Debora Halbert

Vice President for Academic Strategy
University of Hawai'i System

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

Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i (UH) strongly supports HB 2411 – 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.



**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

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DEPUTY DIRECTOR

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Statement of
JAMES KUNANE TOKIOKA
Director
Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism
before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TECHNOLOGY

Wednesday, February 11, 2026, 8:30 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room #423

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

Chair Ilagan and Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Committee on Economic Development and Technology: The Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism (DBEDT) submits this testimony with comments on HB2411, 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 for 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 sector partnerships include **healthcare; clean energy and the skilled trades; creative industries; information technology; engineering; natural resources; and transportation**. 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.

DBEDT understands that similar legislation has been introduced this session in the senate, reflecting shared legislative interest in strengthening employer-led sector partnerships statewide.

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. 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.



February 7, 2026

Representative Greggor Ilagan, Chair
Representative Ikaika Hussey, Vice Chair
House Committee on Economic Development and Technology
Hawaii State Legislature

Support for HB2411

Dear Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey and Members of the House Committee on Economic Development and Technology,

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

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 Kealakehe High Schools, and with Hawaii Community College's Palamanui Campus and Ko Education Center.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Stephanie P. Donoho". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Stephanie Donoho, Administrative Director, Kohala Coast Resort Association

Testimony to the House Committee on Economic Development & Technology
Representative Greggor Ilagan, Chair
Representative Ikaika Hussey, Vice Chair

Wednesday, February 11, 2026, at 8:30 AM
Conference Room 423 & Videoconference

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

Aloha e Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Committee:

My name is David Holt, Program Director at Blue Startups. I am writing in **SUPPORT of House Bill 2411 (HB2411)**, 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.

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.



Aloha Chair Ilagan and Members of the Committee,

My name is Mark Munoz, and I am a General Partner at **OM Venture Capital**. Our firm focuses on financial technology, deep technology (AI, space, dual use apps), Climate and we work closely with founders who are building the next generation of Hawai'i's economy. I am writing today to express my strong support for **HB2411**.

In the venture capital industry, we often say that we "bet on people." However, for Hawai'i to remain competitive on a global stage, our startups and established industries need more than just individual talent—they need a cohesive, scalable **talent pipeline** that is directly responsive to the needs of the market.

Why HB2411 is Vital for the Innovation Economy:

- **Market-Alignment for Talent:** As investors, we see a recurring gap where local curricula do not always match the rapid pace of industry evolution. This bill ensures that workforce solutions are **industry-driven**, meaning the education system is solving for the real-world needs of today's employers.
- **De-Risking Local Growth:** High-growth companies are often forced to recruit from the mainland because they cannot find specialized skill sets locally. By creating a stable, dedicated fund at DBEDT for sector partnerships, HB2411 helps keep our "intellectual exports" at home, reducing recruitment costs and operational risks for Hawai'i-based businesses.
- **Leveraging Capital:** The provision for matching federal and private funds is a massive value-add. It allows the State to act as a catalyst, multiplying the impact of every dollar invested and attracting additional outside capital into our workforce ecosystem.
- **Economic Resilience:** By establishing a "Special Fund," the State provides the **consistency** that the private sector needs to make long-term commitments. Workforce development cannot be a year-to-year experiment; it requires the stability this bill provides.

At OM Venture Capital, we believe that Hawai'i has the potential to be a leader in more than hospitality sector, e.g., dual-use tech or the blue economy]. To get there, we must bridge the gap between the classroom and the boardroom. HB2411 is a critical step in building that bridge.

We respectfully urge the committee to pass this measure.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Munoz', written in a cursive style.

Mark Munoz
Managing Partner

HB-2411

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 4:22:41 PM

Testimony for ECD on 2/11/2026 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
PAUL OREM	Photonworks Engineering	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Paul Orem, CEO at Photonworks Engineering LLP. I am writing in **SUPPORT of House Bill 2411 (HB2411)**, 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.

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.



February 11, 2026

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TECHNOLOGY

Rep. Greggor Ilagan, Chair; Rep. Ikaika Hussey, Vice Chair; and Committee Members
Public Hearing, February 11, 2026, 8:30 a.m. – Conference Room 423, State Capitol

Testimony of William F. Anonsen, Managing Partner/Principal of The Maritime Group
In Support of H.B. 2411, Establishing the Hawai'i Employer-Led Sector Partnership Special Fund

My name is William F. Anonsen, the Managing Partner/Principal of The Maritime Group, and I am submitting testimony in support of HB 2411, which establishes the Hawai'i Employer-Led Sector Partnerships Special Fund within DBEDT to provide stable, ongoing support for employer-led, demand-driven workforce partnerships.

In my professional capacity with The Maritime Group, as a council member of the Hawai'i Pacific Export Council and through my collaborative work with the Hawai'i Harbor Users Group, numerous port, shipping, and logistics stakeholders, I see daily how workforce shortages directly impact Hawai'i's supply chain, cost of living, and economic resilience. As a multi-island state, we depend on a skilled maritime and transportation workforce to keep food, fuel, construction materials, and consumer goods moving safely and efficiently.

Across our ports, stevedoring operations, vessel services, logistics companies, and skilled trades, employers face persistent challenges recruiting and retaining qualified local workers. At the same time, many residents seek stable, well-paying careers but lack clear pathways into these industries. Employer-led sector partnerships directly address this gap by aligning education, training, credentials, internships, and apprenticeships with real-time industry demand.

HB 2411 provides the consistent funding and coordination needed to sustain these partnerships and move beyond one-time or short-term programs. By supporting industry-informed training and measurable outcomes, the bill will help strengthen local talent pipelines, reduce reliance on out-of-state recruitment, and ensure Hawai'i's critical maritime and transportation systems remain reliable and resilient.

From both an economic and supply-chain perspective, this is a practical, forward-looking workforce policy that benefits employers, workers, and our broader community. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this measure.

Respectfully submitted,

William F. Anonsen

Managing Partner/Principal
THE MARITIME GROUP

**Testimony to the House Committee on Economic Development & Technology
Representative Greggor Ilagan, Chair
Representative Ikaika Hussey, Vice Chair**

**Wednesday, February 11, 2026, at 8:30 AM
Conference Room 423 & Videoconference**

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

Aloha e Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Committee:

My name is William Chang, President at Mobile IT Force. I am writing in **SUPPORT of House Bill 2411 (HB2411)**, 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.

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.



**Testimony to the House Committee on Economic Development & Technology (ECD)
Representative Greggor Ilagan, Chair
Representative Ikaika Hussey, Vice Chair**

**Wednesday, February 11, 2026, at 8:30AM
Conference Room 423 & Videoconference**

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

Aloha e Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, 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 (HB2411), 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 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 a fundamental issue facing Hawaii's economy: outmigration. 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 requires industry insight into workforce skill gaps, labor shortages, and misalignment between education systems and industry needs. The Chamber believes this method yields strong return on investment by best preparing students to fill the workforce needs of highest importance to industry, thereby strengthening the and preventing the loss of local talent to out-of-state opportunities. With the establishment of a special fund, HB2411 empowers the organizations who practice this method of workforce to mitigate outward migration and ensure a positive future for our students and economy.

For these reasons, the Chamber stands in strong support of House Bill 2411 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.

HB-2411

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 10:13:29 PM

Testimony for ECD on 2/11/2026 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Anna Kelly	AE Consulting LLC	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

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 Hawaii 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 Hawaii is facing critical workforce shortages in sectors like healthcare and skilled trades that are key to Hawaii’s economic future.
- We also know that outmigration data shows that working age Hawaii 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, Hawaii’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 Hawaii needs.

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

HB-2411

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 9:21:25 AM

Testimony for ECD on 2/11/2026 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Megan Blazak	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Honorable Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Committee,

As a constituent of House District 2, I support the intent of this measure. Mahalo.

HB-2411

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 10:45:08 AM

Testimony for ECD on 2/11/2026 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Randall John Francisco	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I submit this testimony in strong support as the state continues to have one of the lowest unemployment in the US. We all are aware that there are a variety of reasons whihc have brought us to this historic low; any effort that creates a pathway for workforce investment and addresses critical shortage areas contributes to both the short and long-term success of Hawaii, espically, when the population continues to decline. Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this legislation. And, thank you Chamber of Commerce for contiuiuing to advocate for its members as well as on the neighbor island communities. Aloha.

HB-2411

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 3:05:38 PM

Testimony for ECD on 2/11/2026 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Charlie Field	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support HB 2411, which establishes the Hawaii Employer-Led Sector Partnerships Special Fund with 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.

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

**Testimony to the House Committee on Economic Development & Technology
Representative Greggor Ilagan, Chair
Representative Ikaika Hussey, Vice Chair**

**Wednesday, February 11, 2026, at 8:30 AM
Conference Room 423 & Videoconference**

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

Aloha e Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jennifer Kumura, Co-founder at UXHI. I am writing in **SUPPORT of House Bill 2411 (HB2411)**, 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.

Through UXHI's work to equip local talent with human-centered design best practices, we regularly engage kama'āina who want to build meaningful careers in Hawai'i but lack access to training that clearly translates to local jobs. Employers consistently share that while local candidates are motivated, they need stronger exposure to real-world tools, workflows, and problem-solving approaches used on the job. When employers help shape training through sector partnerships, we can close the gap—creating clearer pathways that keep local talent employed here rather than forcing them to leave the state for opportunity and creating the right talent that Hawai'i needs.

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.