



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 Labor
February 17, 2026 at 9:00 a.m.

By

Lui Hokoana

Interim Vice President for Community Colleges
University of Hawai'i System

HB 2416 HD1 – RELATING TO A MARITIME YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP PATHWAY PROGRAM.

Chair Sayama, Vice Chair Lee, and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i supports the intent of HB 2416 HD1, which directs Honolulu Community College (HonCC), in partnership with state agencies and maritime employers, to conduct a study and develop a plan for a statewide Maritime Youth Apprenticeship Program for individuals ages 16 to 24. However, the University offers the following comments and proposed amendments to ensure the study is feasible and successful.

- The current draft of HB 2416 HD1 presents several operational hurdles:
- The University cannot absorb the costs of a comprehensive statewide study without a specific appropriation. A study of this scope requires dedicated project management, industry data analysis, and travel for neighbor island stakeholder engagement.
- As drafted, the bill takes effect July 1, 2026, with a report due in December 2026. This five-month window is insufficient to conduct meaningful statewide outreach, coordinate with multiple state agencies, and design a curriculum that meets federal apprenticeship standards.
- Although HonCC is one of several community colleges that conducts career and technical education, it no longer has a Small Vessel Fabrication and Repair program, having closed the program several years ago. Furthermore, HonCC no longer operates or has access to the Marine Education Training Center on Sand Island. It is now operated daily by the Polynesian Voyaging Society. In fact, Windward Community College (WCC) is currently participating in youth pre-apprenticeship maritime work with Kailua High School and maritime partners on O'ahu.

To address these challenges, the University of Hawai'i respectfully requests the following amendments:

- Amend Section 3 to require the report prior to the 2028 Regular Session. This allows for a longer time for planning, stakeholder recruitment, and alignment with the academic calendar.
- The University suggests an appropriation to cover the costs of a temporary project coordinator, data consultants, and statewide industry workshops.
- Amend Section 2(b) to have the UHCC System to lead the study together with participation by HonCC and WCC.
- Amend Section 2(b) to state that a successful study would require the Department of Education, Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism and the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations to provide the necessary workforce and enrollment data to support the findings.
- Acknowledge the existing youth pre-apprenticeship work of Kailua High School, WCC, and maritime partners to ensure the statewide plan builds upon current momentum rather than duplicating effort.

The University of Hawai'i supports the intent of HB 2416 HD1, as long as its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in our BOR Approved Budget and that the operational concerns noted above are addressed.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.



Testimony in **SUPPORT** for HB 2416 HD1,
Relating to a Maritime Youth Apprenticeship Pathway Program

House Committee on Labor
February 17, 2026

Aloha Chair Sayama, Vice Chair Lee, and members of the committee,

The Hawai'i Harbors Users Group is in **support** of HB 2416 HD1, relating to a maritime youth apprenticeship pathway program. This bill directs Honolulu Community College, in partnership with state agencies and maritime employers, to study and develop a plan for a statewide Maritime Youth Apprenticeship Program for individuals ages 16 to 24, requires a report to the Legislature with recommendations on program structure, resource needs, proposed legislation, and implementation options, and appropriates funds for that work.

HHUG represents maritime businesses and stakeholders who rely on a skilled, reliable, and locally based workforce to keep Hawai'i's ports operating safely and efficiently. One of our core priorities is expanding workforce development within the maritime sector, and this measure takes an important step toward building sustainable training pipelines for future generations of mariners, shipyard workers, port operators, and marine service professionals.

By bringing together Honolulu Community College, state agencies, and private-sector employers, HB 2416 HD1 encourages thoughtful collaboration between educators and industry to ensure that training pathways align with real-world needs. The bill's focus on curriculum development, paid on-the-job learning opportunities, mentorship, industry-recognized credentials, and implementation planning will help ensure that any future program is both practical and responsive to Hawai'i's unique maritime economy.

Investing in a strong local workforce strengthens supply-chain reliability, supports economic resilience, and helps retain young residents by connecting them to stable, high-wage careers rooted in our island communities. HHUG believes this study and planning effort will provide lawmakers with the data and recommendations needed to make informed decisions about how best to grow Hawai'i's maritime workforce over the long term.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this important measure.



February 17, 2026

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR

Rep. Jackson Sayama, Chair; Rep. Mike Lee, Vice Chair; and Committee Members
Public Hearing, February 17, 2026, 9:00 a.m. – Conference Room 309, State Capitol

**Testimony of William F. Anonsen, Managing Partner/Principal of The Maritime Group
In Support of H.B. 2416 HD1, Relating to Maritime Youth Apprenticeship Pathway Program**

My name is William F. Anonsen, Managing Partner/Principal of The Maritime Group. I respectfully submit testimony in support of HB 2416, HD1, as advanced by the HED Committee. As previously shared in my testimony before the HED, Hawai'i's maritime transportation system underpins our economic stability, supply chain reliability, and public safety.

In a multi-island state where the vast majority of goods arrive by sea, maintaining a skilled maritime workforce is essential to our resilience. HSCR 133-26 correctly identifies the core challenge: persistent workforce shortages in maritime occupations driven by an aging workforce, limited training pipelines, and insufficient exposure of young people to high-wage career pathways. These shortages are evident across the maritime industry and logistics sectors statewide.

I strongly support the amendments reflected in H.D.1 and summarized in HSCR 133-26, including clarifying that maritime apprenticeship development is a matter of statewide concern; defining the roles of the University of Hawai'i and Community College System; adding the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations as a data partner; providing for coordination and industry workshops; and encouraging continued discussion through the amended effective date.

This measured, planning-first approach is fiscally responsible and strategically sound. Directing a comprehensive statewide study and implementation plan — aligned with industry needs and employer participation — increases the likelihood of building a sustainable and scalable program.

A well-structured maritime youth apprenticeship pathway will:

- Create clear entry points for local youth into skilled trades;
- Provide paid, hands-on training tied to industry-recognized credentials;
- Support family-sustaining careers and reduce youth out-migration; and
- Strengthen Hawai'i's port resilience and supply chain security.

This initiative builds on existing pre-apprenticeship efforts and creates a coordinated statewide framework. From my work with maritime operators, harbor stakeholders, and workforce partners, there is broad recognition that rebuilding Hawai'i's local talent pipeline is both urgent and necessary. The measure represents a prudent investment in Hawai'i's workforce and long-term economic stability.

Respectfully submitted,

William F. Anonsen

Managing Partner/Principal
THE MARITIME GROUP



**TESTIMONY OF TINA YAMAKI, MANAGING DIRECTOR
HAWAII TRANSPORTATION ASSOCIATION
FEBRUARY 17, 2026**

HB 2416 HD1 RELATING TO A MARITIME YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP PATHWAY PROGRAM.

Aloha Chair Sayama and members of the House Committee on Labor. I am Tina Yamaki, Managing Director of the Hawaii Transportation Association and I appreciate this opportunity to testify.

The Hawaii Transportation Association (HTA Hawaii) was founded in 1938 and incorporated in 1963, and is a private, non-profit trade organization dedicated to the service and assistance to the commercial ground transportation industry in the State of Hawaii. Our members include family owned small and medium sized businesses, independent owner operators, and national motor carriers range from delivery services to passenger carriers - as well as allied industry partners.

HTA Hawaii supports HB 2416 HD1. This measure directs the University of Hawaii Community College System, in partnership with state agencies and maritime employers, to conduct a study and develop a plan for a statewide Maritime Youth Apprenticeship Program for individuals ages 16 to 24; requires a report to the Legislature with recommendations on program structure, resource needs, proposed legislation and implementation options; appropriates funds; and is effective 7/1/3000.

Hawaii's economy, food security, energy supply, and overall cost of living are directly tied to maritime transportation. As an island state surrounded by water, we depend on shipping for the vast majority of our essential goods including food, fuel, construction materials, medical supplies, and consumer products. A strong, skilled maritime workforce is not optional for Hawaii - it is critical infrastructure.

However, the maritime sector, like many trades, faces workforce challenges. There is an urgent need to build a pipeline of local workers who understand maritime operations and can move into careers in vessel operations, port services, maintenance, logistics, and related skilled trades. Without deliberate workforce development, Hawaii risks increased reliance on out-of-state labor and potential disruptions in this vital sector.

This bill takes an important and practical step by focusing first on planning and coordination. By leveraging Honolulu Community College's expertise and partnering with maritime employers and state agencies, this measure ensures that any apprenticeship model developed will be aligned with real industry needs, safety standards, and career pathways. We hope that programs like this will also be expanded to transportation.

A Maritime Youth Apprenticeship Program would introduce young people to high-demand, family-sustaining careers that do not always require a traditional four-year degree; provide structured, hands-on learning combined with classroom instruction; strengthen workforce readiness in critical sectors that support Hawaii's supply chain and port operations; and create upward mobility opportunities for local youth, particularly those seeking alternatives to conventional academic routes.

Targeting individuals ages 16 to 24 is especially important, as early exposure and work-based learning significantly improve long-term career attachment and skill development.

The required report to the Legislature including recommendations on program structure, resource needs, and potential legislation will provide policymakers with the information necessary to design an effective and sustainable program. Appropriating funds for this planning effort reflect the State's recognition that maritime workforce development is an investment in economic resilience and public well-being.

HB 2416 supports workforce development, economic stability, and Hawaii's long-term self-sufficiency. For an island state whose lifeline runs through its harbors, strengthening the maritime workforce is both strategic and necessary.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the Committee to pass HB 2416.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify.

**Testimony to the House Committee on Labor
Representative Jackson D. Sayama, Chair
Representative Mike Lee, Vice Chair**

**Tuesday, February 17, 2026, at 9:00 AM
Conference Room 309 & Videoconference**

RE: HB2416 HD1 Relating to Marime Youth Apprenticeship Pathway Program

Aloha e Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, 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 2416 House Draft 1 (HB2416 HD1), which directs the University of Hawai'i Community College System, in partnership with state agencies and maritime employers, to conduct a study and develop a plan for a statewide Maritime Youth Apprenticeship Program for individuals ages 16 to 24. The measure requires a report to the Legislature outlining recommendations on program structure, resource needs, proposed legislation, and implementation options.

HB2416 HD1 aligns with the 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii under the Maritime Policy Pillar, advancing workforce readiness, economic diversification, and long-term resilience. Hawaii's maritime sector faces ongoing workforce shortages driven by an aging workforce and limited training pipelines, while many local youth lack access to paid, hands-on pathways into high-wage careers. Without strategic action, these gaps will continue to strain supply chain reliability and accelerate youth out-migration.

Research shows that structured apprenticeship and work-based learning improve employment outcomes, increase credential attainment, and enhance retention. Maritime careers provide family-sustaining wages and transferable technical skills tied directly to Hawaii's ocean-based economy. By directing the University of Hawai'i Community College system to conduct a comprehensive, industry-driven study, this measure takes a deliberate and data-informed approach to building a sustainable statewide talent pipeline.

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.

We respectfully ask to pass House Bill 2416 House Draft 1. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

February 17, 2026

House Committee on Labor
Representative Jackson D. Sayama, Chair
Representative Mike Lee, Vice Chair



Tuesday, February 17, 2026, 9:00 a.m.
Conference Room #309 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

RE: HB 2416 HD1 Relating to a Maritime Youth Apprenticeship Program

Dear Chair Sayama, Vice Chair Lee and members of the Committee,

My name is Kiran Polk, and I am the Executive Director & CEO of the Kapolei Chamber of Commerce. The Kapolei Chamber of Commerce is an advocate for businesses in the Kapolei region including Waipahu, Kapolei, 'Ewa Beach, Nānakūli, Wai'anae, and Mākaha. We work on behalf of our members and the broader business community to improve the regional and State economic climate and to help West O'ahu businesses thrive.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony **in support of HB 2614**, which directs the University of Hawai'i Community College System, in partnership with state agencies and maritime employers, to conduct a comprehensive study and develop a plan for a statewide Maritime Youth Apprenticeship Program serving individuals ages 16 to 24.

Hawai'i's maritime sector, including port and harbor operations, shipbuilding and repair, marine transportation, and ocean-based industries; **is essential to our state's economic resilience, supply chain reliability, and emergency preparedness.** At the same time, **Hawai'i faces persistent workforce shortages in maritime occupations** due to an aging workforce, limited training pipelines, and insufficient exposure of young people to viable, high-wage career pathways.

HB 2614 supports the development of **paid, hands-on maritime apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship pathways** that connect **high school coursework to postsecondary training and registered apprenticeships.** By leveraging the expertise of the **University of Hawai'i Community College System** and engaging maritime employers and labor representatives, the bill helps ensure training programs are **aligned with real workforce needs** and support **industry-recognized credentials.** These pathways provide young people with access to **family-sustaining careers** while strengthening Hawai'i's maritime workforce and supporting interisland commerce, economic resilience, and emergency preparedness.

Supporting Workforce Development in West O'ahu

Workforce development is especially important to **West O'ahu as the fastest-growing region in the state**. As population and economic activity continue to expand, connecting students to viable career pathways through work-based learning is essential. The Kapolei Chamber has established itself as a **Career Hub**, working in partnership with the University of Hawai'i at West O'ahu, the Hawai'i State Department of Education, and local employers to strengthen the pipeline from K–12 to postsecondary education and into the workforce. Career exploration is only the starting point. **Apprenticeships and work-based learning opportunities, such as those envisioned in HB 2614, are the critical next step** in preparing students for skilled, in-demand careers while supporting employers across key industries.

By investing in the planning and development of a Maritime Youth Apprenticeship Program, HB 2614 lays the foundation for long-term workforce development, economic resilience, and opportunity for Hawai'i's next generation.

We respectfully urge your support for **HB 2416** and its passage to strengthen our early learning workforce, expand childcare opportunities, and support economic growth in our communities.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony.

Best,

Kiran Polk
Executive Director & CEO