



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 12, 2026 at 9:30 a.m.

By

Debora Halbert

Vice President for Academic Strategy
University of Hawai'i System

HB 2468 – RELATING TO INTERNSHIP PROGRAMS.

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

The University of Hawai'i supports HB 2468 – Relating to Internship Programs. We especially appreciate the addition of this item (page 2, lines 7-12): "(3) Experience gained by an intern participating in the internship program established pursuant to section 394-11 shall be applied towards the experience needed to meet the minimum qualification requirements under this chapter for civil service positions of a similar level and scope to the internship." Without this modification, college graduates with no work experience remain ineligible for vacant positions in the public and private sectors with minimum work experience requirements.

We also support removing the eligibility restriction that a student be currently enrolled "(B) In an accredited college or university, or has earned a college or university degree within one year of applying for the internship" (page 6, lines 1-3). Removing this restriction will open this opportunity to students who want to explore different fields before enrolling in a college or university program, as well as alumni who may be more than one year post-graduation. Given the importance of internships to career exploration, development and success, UH supports opening participation beyond current high school and college or university students in their last year of study and those who have graduated within the past year.

Finally, we would like to comment on a newly imposed restriction (page 14, lines 11-15) that an eligible intern "(3) Be currently enrolled: (A) In a public high school, or has earned a high school diploma or its equivalent; or (B) In an accredited college or university, or has earned a college or university degree." If all students and graduates of any accredited college or university are eligible, should not all local high school students or recent graduates be similarly eligible for participation? In other words, restricting participation to public high school students only inadvertently closes off significant numbers of homeschooled and private school students. There is nothing inherent in employers' needs that would preclude these students' participation as interns, and so we suggest considering striking the word "public" here, on page 5 (line 19), and again on page 15 (line 15).

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



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

Date: 02/12/2026

Time: 09:30 AM

Location: 309 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Committee: LAB

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB2468, RELATING TO INTERNSHIP PROGRAMS.

Purpose of Bill: Expands the on-the-job training work experience program for the private sector by authorizing the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations to enter into contracts with trade organizations to provide on-the-job training to participating interns. Removes the requirement that high school, college, or university graduates have graduated within 1 year of applying for the on-the-job training work experience program and state internship and workforce development program. Repeals the requirement that participating sponsors contribute 50 per cent of each intern's fringe benefits. Amends the state internship and workforce development program for the public sector by requiring the coordinating agency work sites to provide work experience that helps interns meet the minimum qualification requirements for employment in the relevant positions, including civil service positions. Transfers certain duties from the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations to the Department of Human Resources Development. Requires the Department of Human Resources Development to apply the internship experience towards the minimum qualification requirements for similar civil service positions. Appropriates moneys.

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) supports HB 2468, which expands the job training program administered by the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR) and enables internship experience within State departments, agencies, and programs to be applied towards the minimum qualification requirements for positions similar to which the participant interned.

The Department appreciates the support for paid student internships in both the private and public sectors and is committed to partnering with DLIR to continue to facilitate internships for high school students. The expansion of the program will increase access to work-based learning opportunities for Department high school students statewide. This aligns with the Department's mission to prepare students for college, career, and citizenship; encourages

students to consider a career with local industries and employers; and facilitates strong public-private partnerships, leading to a stronger sense of community and a shared responsibility over education, workforce development, and a sustainable economy.

The Department also appreciates the consideration for internship experience within the public sector to be applied towards the minimum qualification requirements for positions similar to which the participant interned. This will enable state agencies to hire interns, including graduating high school students, as permanent employees and encourage interns to transition to state employment.

The Department defers to DLIR regarding the implementation of the amendments to the on-the-job training work experience program as outlined in Section 2, but does request clarification as to what may be reimbursed to the employer or sponsor hosting interns through the on-the-job training work experience program.

The Department defers to DLIR and the Department of Human Resources Development regarding the implementation of the amendments to the state internship and workforce development program outlined in Section 3.

The Department thanks the Legislature for its continued support of our work-based learning initiatives and our goal for all students to be globally competitive and locally committed. Preparing our students for the current and emerging workforce here at home will not only address our workforce needs, but will also lead to a thriving Hawaii.

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

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



JADE T. BUTAY
DIRECTOR

WILLIAM G. KUNSTMAN
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
KA 'OIHANA PONO LIMAHANA

February 12, 2026

To: The Honorable Jackson D. Sayama, Chair,
The Honorable Mike Lee, Vice Chair, and
Members of the House Committee on Labor

Date: Thursday, February 12, 2026
Time: 9:30 a.m.
Place: Conference Room 309, State Capitol

From: Jade T. Butay, Director
Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR)

Re: H.B. 2468 RELATING TO INTERNSHIPS

I. OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED LEGISLATION

The DLIR **supports the intent** of this measure, if it does not adversely impact the priorities identified in the Governor's Executive Supplemental Budget request, and **suggests amendments**. HB2468 amends Act 251 (SLH, 2025) by:

- Expanding the On-the-Job Training (OJT) internship program in the private sector by authorizing the DLIR to contract with trade organizations, without regard to HRS Chapters 103D and 103F to:
 1. Coordinate internship placements with employers and sponsors, and
 2. Provide administrative support to employers and sponsors that lack administrative capacity.
- Defining "sponsor" and "trade organization".
- Clarifying that §394-10 applies only to private sector internships.
- Clarifying that employer reimbursement covers only the intern's wages.
- Authorizing the Department to set the maximum number of interns per employer or sponsor, replacing the statutory cap of five.
- Removing the requirement that an intern be within one year of attaining a degree or credential.
- Clarifying that sponsors must contribute 50 percent of the intern's wages.
- Transferring certain DLIR responsibilities to DHRD under §394-11(e), including recognizing internship experience as meeting part of the Minimum

Qualification (MQ) requirements for civil service positions.

- Amending the Civil Service Law (HRS Chapter 76) to require that public-sector internship experience count toward meeting the MQs for comparable civil service positions.
- Aligning eligibility requirements by replicating the provisions of §394-10 in §394-11 through a new subsection (h), ensuring similar eligibility criteria for both private and public sector internships.

II. CURRENT LAW

The Legislature enacted Act 251 (SLH 2025) to codify the existing public-sector internship program, Hele Imua, and to authorize its expansion into the private sector. The Hele Imua Internship Program launched as a successful pilot in FY2021, and the 2022 Legislature subsequently incorporated program funding into the Department's base budget, where it continues through the current fiscal year.

III. COMMENTS ON THE HOUSE BILL

The twofold purpose of Act 251 was to authorize DLIR to administer an on-the-job (OTJ) work experience program (modeled on a federal program) but for exclusively secondary and postsecondary students by expanding the Hele Imua program to the private sector. Act 251 also codified the existing Hele Imua program, under which DLIR and DHRD collaborate to place interns in executive branch entities to provide practical work experience and foster interest in public service.

The current language in §394-10 and §394-11 creates confusion through inconsistent use of “employers,” “sponsors,” “employers and sponsors,” and “employers or registered apprenticeship programs.” The current draft of HB2468 largely resolves this issue by defining “sponsor” and aligning eligibility language in both sections. HB2468 also clarifies that §394-10 pertains to private sector internships and §394-11 applies to public sector internships.

DLIR strongly supports amendments that make the statute consistent with federal law by clarifying that reimbursement to employers or sponsors is for wages only. Calculating fifty percent of a sponsor's fringe benefits for reimbursement creates an unnecessary administrative burden. To further clarify, DLIR recommends deleting “sponsors” and inserting “employers” on Pg. 9, line 1.

To further clarify this matter, the Department recommends replacing the language on Pg. 3, lines 2—6 with:

To help defray the costs of training and supervising an intern, the department may only reimburse an employer for an intern's wages up to \$20 per hour.

Similarly, on Pg. 4, lines 16—18, replace the current language with:

To help defray the costs of training and supervising an intern, the department may only reimburse an employer for an intern's wages up to \$20 per hour.

DLIR is concerned that expanding eligibility for secondary and postsecondary students beyond "within one year of applying for the internship" would create significant scalability challenges for both DLIR and DHRD. This is the first year of operating the program on a statutory basis, and as reflected in this measure, the departments are still collaborating with the Legislature to refine the statute.

Therefore, the language contained in the proposed subsection (h) of §394-11 permitting any person with a high school diploma or its equivalent or earned a college or university degree should also be limited to "within one year of applying for the internship." (Pg. 14, lines 12-15).

Relatedly, DLIR suggests refining eligibility provisions in §394-10 (page 5, line 18 to page 6, line 3) and §394-11 (page 14, lines 12–15) for consistency. Paragraph (3) in §394-10 begins with "Be currently enrolled:" and includes "within one year of applying for the internship." DLIR recommends that eligibility language in §394-11 mirror that of §394-10.

The DLIR supports the amendment to HRS Chapter 76 to help ensure an intern's experience is applied towards meeting the minimum qualification requirements for civil service positions.

The Department appreciates the opportunity to refine the language of Act 251 and looks forward to continuing to work with the Legislature to improve Act 251 as the Hele Imua program has proved successful and has the potential to address the State's critical workforce shortages by creating a clear bridge from work-based training to employment.



JOSH GREEN, M. D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR
KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA

BRENN A H. HASHIMOTO
DIRECTOR
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

BRIAN K. FURUTO
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT
KA 'OIHANA HO'OMŌHALA LIMAHANA
235 S. BERETANIA STREET
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813-2437

Statement of
BRENN A H. HASHIMOTO
Director, Department of Human Resources Development

Before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR
Thursday, February 12, 2026
9:30AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 309

In consideration of
HB2468, RELATING TO INTERNSHIP PROGRAMS

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

The Department of Human Resources Development (HRD) **supports** HB2468 with amendments.

The purpose of this measure is to expand and strengthen the State's internship and workforce development programs, improve coordination between agencies, and better align internship experience with future employment opportunities in both the public and private sectors.

HB2468 advances several objectives that align with HRD's workforce development mission. The bill strengthens talent pipelines into civil service employment, recognizes the value of structured work experience, and enhances coordination between the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (LBR), HRD, and executive branch agencies. These efforts support recruitment, retention, and the development of a skilled local workforce.

HRD's comments focus on provisions that expand or shift responsibilities affecting classification, recruitment, and minimum qualification evaluation under Chapter 76, Hawai'i Revised Statutes. While HRD supports these objectives, targeted amendments are necessary to preserve merit principles, maintain evaluative discretion, and ensure adequate resources for implementation.

Page 15, lines 4–8 require the Director of Human Resources Development to apply internship experience toward meeting minimum qualification requirements for civil service positions of a similar level and scope.

HRD supports recognizing relevant internship experience. In practice, examiners within HRD's Employee Staffing Division already consider internship experience when evaluating applicant qualifications, provided the internship is not part of academic coursework, and the experience is relevant in scope and level to the position being filled. This approach allows internship experience to be credited where appropriate while maintaining consistency with established class specifications and merit principles.

As drafted, however, the bill removes necessary evaluative discretion by mandating the application of internship experience. Chapter 76 requires minimum qualification determinations to be based on the relevance, scope, and level of experience. A mandatory requirement to apply internship experience, regardless of these factors, risks inconsistent and inequitable outcomes across classifications.

While we are in support of this measure, we respectfully request the following amendments to the measure's current language.

- On Page 15, lines 4–8, add language to read:
“The director of human resources development shall may evaluate and, as appropriate, apply the experience gained by an intern participating in the program towards the experience needed to meet the minimum qualification requirements under chapter 76 for civil service positions of a similar level and scope to the internship.”

HB2468 includes additional provisions that collectively expand HRD's operational role.

1. Page 12, lines 3–7 require coordinating agency work sites to provide work experience that helps interns meet minimum qualification requirements for employment, including civil service positions.

Minimum qualification standards are developed and administered by HRD, and this provision directly links internship design to civil service requirements.

2. Page 12, lines 16–21 and page 13, lines 1–6 assign HRD responsibility to ensure internship experience helps participants qualify for vacant positions and to recognize that experience as meeting part of the minimum qualification requirements.

These provisions expand HRD's role beyond evaluation into program alignment, guideline development, and interagency coordination.

3. Page 13, lines 14–20, and page 14, lines 1–4 require DLIR to provide intern-specific information to DHRD to assist interns in pursuing future State employment.

This positions HRD as the downstream evaluator and advisor for internship participants seeking civil service employment.

Taken together, these provisions materially expand HRD's responsibilities and workload.

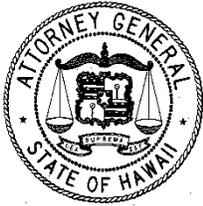
To ensure effective implementation and consistency with Chapter 76, we also respectfully recommend the amendments below:

- Page 12, lines 16–21 and page 13, lines 1–6:
Amend to clarify that HRD's expanded responsibilities are subject to available resources.
"The department of human resources development shall, subject to available appropriations:
(1) Ensure that the experience gained through the program helps participants qualify for vacant positions of a similar level and scope within an executive branch department or agency, including recognizing the experience as meeting part of the minimum qualification requirements of employment in a position pursuant to chapter 76;
(2) Develop standardized guidelines to align internship duties with the qualifications required for full-time employment;"
- Page 16, line 17, appropriation section:
Insert language to support HRD staffing needs:
"Of the amounts appropriated, funds shall be provided to the department of human resources development for staffing and operational support, including 2.0 full-time equivalent positions and funds, to implement the responsibilities under this Act."

These positions would support HRD's expanded duties, including reviewing and evaluating internship experience for minimum qualification purposes; developing and maintaining standardized guidelines aligned with civil service class specifications; and performing the intern-specific employment assistance functions described on page 13, lines 14–20 and page 14, lines 1–4, which require HRD to receive intern information from LBR and assist interns in pursuing future employment with the State executive branch.

HB2468 reflects a strong commitment to workforce development and talent retention. HRD already recognizes relevant, non-academic internship experience when evaluating applicant qualifications and supports the bill's intent to strengthen these pathways. Adoption of the recommended amendments is essential to preserve merit principles, maintain evaluative discretion under Chapter 76, and ensure HRD has the resources necessary to carry out the expanded responsibilities contemplated by the bill.

HRD supports HB2468 with amendments.



**TESTIMONY OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2026**

ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:

H.B. NO. 2468, RELATING TO INTERNSHIP PROGRAMS.

BEFORE THE:

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR

DATE: Thursday, February 12, 2026 **TIME:** 9:30 a.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 309

TESTIFIER(S): Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General,
Li-Ann Yamashiro, Deputy Attorney General
Lauren A. Sugai, Deputy Attorney General

Chair Sayama and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Attorney General provides the following comments.

This bill amends sections 394-10 and 394-11, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), which involve state sponsored internship programs in private and public sectors. Regarding section 394-10, HRS, this bill authorizes the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR) to reimburse private employers or sponsors for an intern's wages up to \$20 hourly only for the costs of training and supervising an intern. The bill also revises the eligibility criteria of an intern and authorizes DLIR to enter into contracts with trade organizations to coordinate internship placements and provide administrative support to employers or sponsors. Regarding section 394-11, HRS, this bill provides eligibility criteria for an intern and allows the public sector internship experience to count towards minimum requirements for employment in civil service under section 76-16, HRS.

This bill theoretically may implicate the Equal Protection Clause under the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution and article I, section 5, of the Hawaii Constitution because only public high school students can be eligible interns for these private and public sector internships and the bill excludes private high school students.

To avoid any potential Equal Protection issues, we recommend including a preamble with legislative findings that offering internships to public high school students furthers a legitimate state interest of using the State's limited resources to coordinate with the Department of Education to provide internships for its high school students, or other bases, to expressly state the reasonable justification for this classification.

In addition, we suggest clarification on contracts with a "sponsor." Page 10, lines 6 to 9, of the bill defines "sponsor" as "any person, employer, association, committee, or organization operating an apprenticeship program and in whose name the program is registered with the department of labor and industrial relations." Therefore, a sponsor can be an employer, or an association, committee or organization with multiple employers. Section 2 of the bill, specifically section 394-10(a) starting on page 2, line 15, authorizes DLIR to enter into contracts with sponsors to provide on-the-job training and reimburse sponsors for an intern's wages for training and supervision costs. It is unclear, however, whether the DLIR can enter into a contract where the sponsor is not the employer that pays, trains, or supervises the interns. In such cases, the sponsor may function more like a trade organization rather than an employer. Because a sponsor may be either an employer or an organization representing multiple employers, clarification is needed regarding references to "sponsor" throughout section 2 to address the situation when the sponsor is an employer and when it is a trade organization.

We also suggest technical amendments to this bill as follows:

- Remove the wording "and trade organizations" on page 2, lines 18 to 19, of the bill. Section 394-10(a) is amended to allow DLIR to contract with trade organizations in addition to employers or sponsors, but references contracts with trade organizations in section 394-10(h), HRS, starting on page 9, line 10, which can cause confusion.
- Remove the word "extraordinary" on page 4, line 17, so the wording reads: "Reimburse employers or sponsors up to \$20.00 per hour for an intern's wages for the costs of providing intern training and supervision." This wording is consistent with the wording on page 3, lines 2 to 5.

- Clarify intern eligibility criteria on page 5, lines 18 to 21, and page 6, lines 1 to 3, to read:

"(3) Be currently enrolled:

(A) In a public high school [~~or has earned a high school diploma or its equivalent within one year of applying for the internship~~]; or

(B) In an accredited college or university [~~or has earned a college or university degree within one year of applying for the internship~~];

(4) Has earned a high school diploma or its equivalent or a college or university degree."

- Redesignate the intern eligibility criteria accordingly.
- Clarify whether the intern's cumulative grade point average on page 6, lines 4 to 6, applies to high school, college, or both.
- Clarify whether there are funds appropriated for contracts with trade organizations or sponsors that are not employers in addition to funds for contracts with employers.

We appreciate the intent of this bill and are available to work with the Legislature and DLIR to accomplish the goals in this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.



February 10, 2026

Representative Jackson Sayama, Chair
Representative Mike Lee, Vice Chair
House Committee on Labor
Hawaii State Legislature

Support for HB2468

Dear Chair Sayama, Vice Chair Lee and Members of the House Committee on Labor,

On behalf of the Kohala Coast Resort Association (KCRA) thank you for providing us with the opportunity to provide our **SUPPORT of HB2468.**

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 and internship programs.

The 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 between local government and the private sector and we respectfully ask your committee to pass HB2468.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephanie P. Donoho". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Stephanie Donoho, Administrative Director, Kohala Coast Resort Association



**Testimony to the House Committee on Labor
Thursday, February 12, 2026; 9:30 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 309
Via Videoconference**

RE: HOUSE BILL NO. 2468, RELATING TO INTERNSHIP PROGRAMS.

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

The Hawaii Primary Care Association (HPCA) is a 501(c)(3) organization established to advocate for, expand access to, and sustain high quality care through the statewide network of Community Health Centers throughout the State of Hawaii. The HPCA **SUPPORTS** House Bill No. 2468, RELATING TO INTERNSHIP PROGRAMS.

By way of background, the HPCA represents Hawaii's Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). FQHCs provide desperately needed medical services at the frontlines to over 150,000 patients each year who live in rural and underserved communities. Long considered champions for creating a more sustainable, integrated, and wellness-oriented system of health, FQHCs provide a more efficient, more effective and more comprehensive system of healthcare.

The bill, as received by your Committee, would allow the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR) to contract with trade organizations for different industry sectors to:

- (1) Coordinate internship placements with the DLIR and employers or sponsors; and
- (2) Provide administrative support to employers or sponsors who would otherwise lack the capacity to participate in the program.

In addition, this bill would appropriate an unspecified amount of general funds for fiscal year 2026-2027, for the implementation and operation of the on-the-job training work experience program for the private sector, and the operation of the state internship and workforce development program.

The bill would take effect on July 1, 2026.

Testimony on House Bill No. 2468

Thursday, February 11, 2026; 9:30 a.m.

Page 2

The State of Hawaii is experiencing a severe shortage of health care professionals in the workforce, especially in rural areas. Recent studies note that the current shortage of physicians is at 20% of the total full-time equivalent positions throughout the State. The shortage is especially severe in the fields of primary care, infectious diseases, colorectal surgery, pathology, general surgery, pulmonology, neurology, neurosurgery, orthopedic surgery, family medicine, cardiothoracic surgery, rheumatology, cardiology, hematology/oncology, and pediatric subspecialties of endocrinology, cardiology, neurology, hematology/oncology, and gastroenterology.

The same can be said for registered and practical nurses, community health workers, social workers, pharmacists, and other disciplines in the field of health care.

The HPCA believes this program would provide a needed service to our community by preparing students for meaningful employment, diversifying their learning opportunities, and promoting responsible citizenship. In addition, the program will facilitate partnerships between businesses and educators for the creation of mentoring ventures and other opportunities so that Hawaii's youth may gain the practical experience that will enable them to be productive members of our labor force. This is critical for the field of health care, especially in rural communities.

Because of this, the HPCA respectfully requests your favorable consideration of this measure.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Public Affairs and Policy Director Erik K. Abe at 536-8442, or eabe@hawaiiipca.net.

HB-2468

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 10:46:14 AM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

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

I support the intent of this measure. It is well-documented that the State struggles to fill vacancies across many agencies and departments. This measure proposes beneficial innovation in the State's approach to workforce development, on-the-job training, and internship programs, with the expectation that these changes will lead to more cost-efficient recruitment and retention of qualified state employees. These changes will also make it easier for young people in the workforce to gain employment, which is critical for the future success of the state's economy.