

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 9, 2026

To: The Honorable Brandon J.C. Elefante, Chair,
The Honorable Rachele Lamosao, Vice Chair, and
Members of the Senate Committee on Labor and Technology

To: The Honorable Angus L.K. Mckelvey, Chair,
The Honorable Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair, and
Members of the Senate Committee on Government Operations

Date: Monday, February 9, 2026
Time: 3:00 p.m.
Place: Conference Room 225, State Capitol

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

Re: S.B. 2137 RELATING TO PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT

The **DLIR supports** this measure that amends the Civil Service Law (HRS Chapter 76) to authorize state departments to elect to assume hiring and recruitment functions for vacant civil service positions and repeals §76-22.6, which authorizes departments to conduct a minimum qualification review of applicants for vacant positions. The Department would appreciate the flexibility to choose specific positions for which it assumes hiring and recruitment functions. Granting DLIR this selective authority would enable the Department to fill hard-to-recruit, specialized positions, including some unique to DLIR, without imposing a significant administrative burden.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on this important matter.

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JOSH GREEN, M. D.
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KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR
KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA

BRENNA 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
BRENNA H. HASHIMOTO
Director, Department of Human Resources Development

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND TECHNOLOGY
SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Monday, February 9, 2026
3:00PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 225

In consideration of
SB2137, RELATING TO PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT

Chair Elefante, Chair McKelvey, and members of the Committee on Labor and Technology and Committee on Government Operations:

The Department of Human Resources Development (HRD) appreciates the intent of SB2137; however, we must respectfully oppose this measure.

SB2137 does the following:

- Authorizes state departments, divisions, and agencies to elect to assume hiring and recruitment functions from the Department of Human Resources Development for vacant civil service positions within that department, division, or agency under certain conditions.
- Requires the Department of Human Resources Development to adopt rules.
- Repeals existing law authorizing state departments, divisions, and agencies to conduct minimum qualification review of applicants for their vacant civil service positions.

SB2137 dismantles the State's centralized civil service recruitment model and replaces it with a fragmented, agency-by-agency approach. This shift weakens merit principles, increases risk, and drives up cost.

One of HRD's primary objectives is to provide a single, statewide hiring system. Centralization ensures consistent minimum qualification review, uniform merit standards, defensible hiring decisions, and equal treatment of applicants across departments. SB2137 moves those controls away from the State's central authority and places them inside individual agencies, many of which lack the staffing, training, or infrastructure to perform this work at scale.

It should also be noted that many departments already possess delegated hiring authority. Through the class delegation program, a department can request delegated authority and once approved, manage the entire recruitment and hiring process. Currently, 155 civil service classes are delegated across multiple departments. This framework allows departments to move faster while preserving statewide standards, oversight, and accountability.

Decentralized recruitment under SB2137 goes well beyond existing delegation. Agencies will interpret minimum qualifications, screening criteria, and interview standards differently. This increases exposure to appeal, creates equity concerns, and undermines public confidence in the civil service system.

The bill also duplicates effort and incurs additional costs. Each opting agency would need its own recruiters, qualification reviewers, and compliance processes. The State would need to fund multiple parallel hiring operations rather than a single shared capability.

To address time-to-hire concerns, HRD has already implemented targeted solutions within the centralized model. These include:

- Wikiwiki Hire, which streamlines recruitment for high-need positions by simplifying job postings, accelerating qualification review, and allowing faster referrals to departments while maintaining merit standards.
- Act 186 hiring authorities, which expanded flexible hiring pathways for hard-to-fill positions and supported faster onboarding through alternative recruitment and appointment mechanisms.
- Holo delegation, which authorizes qualified departments to conduct recruitment and selection activities for shared classes under DHRD oversight, with required training, standardized procedures, and ongoing compliance monitoring.

These initiatives focus on speed without sacrificing consistency, equity, or defensibility. They address the problem SB2137 seeks to solve without dismantling the State's enterprise hiring structure.

Current law already balances efficiency and accountability. SB2137 repeals that balance and removes critical guardrails. The bill lacks clear audit thresholds, enforceable corrective authority, and a statewide performance framework.

For these reasons, SB2137 is not in the best interest of the State workforce or the public.

If the Legislature seeks faster hiring, targeted improvements using a combination of the various hiring programs while maintaining the centralized model remains the appropriate path. Broad decentralization is not.

HRD respectfully urges the Committee to hold SB2137.

JOSH B. GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



STACEY A. ALDRICH
STATE LIBRARIAN
Ke Po'o Hale Waihona Puke Moku'āina

STATE OF HAWAII
HAWAII STATE PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM
'OIHANA HALE WAIHONA PUKE AUPUNI O KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
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Senate Committee on Labor and Technology
February 11, 2026, 3:00 p.m.
State Capitol, Room 225

SB 2137 – Relating to Public Employment

To: Sen. Brandon J.C. Elefante, Chair
Sen Rachele Lamosao, Vice Chair
Members of the Senate Committee on Labor and Technology

Sen. Angus L.K. McKelvey, Chair
Sen. Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair
Members of the Senate Committee on Government Operations

The Hawai'i State Public Library System (HSPLS) **supports the intent** regarding SB2137 which authorizes state departments, divisions, and agencies to elect to assume hiring and recruitment functions from the Department of Human Resources Development for vacant civil service positions within that department, division, or agency under certain conditions; requires the Department of Human Resources Development to adopt rules; and repeals existing law authorizing state departments, divisions, and agencies to conduct minimum qualification review of applicants for their vacant civil service positions.

While this measure would provide HSPLS with flexibility to address hard to fill and specialized positions that are unique to HSPLS, the steps and process that will be required for departments to implement the hiring and recruitment functions will eventually determine whether or not this bill will result in a more expeditious hiring process.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB2271 and for your continued support of the Hawai'i State Public Library System.



The Senate Committees on Labor and Technology &
Government Operations
February 9, 2026
Room 225
3:00 PM

RE: SB 2137, Relating to Public Employment

Attention: Chairs Brandon J.C. Elefante and Angus L.K. McKelvey, Vice Chairs Rachele Lamosao and Mike Gabbard, Members of the Committees

The University of Hawaii Professional Assembly (UHPA), the exclusive bargaining representative for all University of Hawai'i faculty members across Hawai'i's statewide 10-campus system, **supports SB 2137.**

To serve the public effectively, state agencies depend on a full complement of administrative, technical, and operational support. However, the current centralized hiring model often results in bottlenecks and prolonged vacancies in these critical roles. These gaps place an unsustainable burden on existing staff, diverting them from their core duties and compromising the delivery of essential government services.

We believe that **SB 2137** offers a necessary remedy by empowering agencies to directly assume responsibility for recruitment and hiring functions, while ensuring that all recruitment activities remain in full compliance with civil service laws and merit principles. Decentralizing these functions will foster a more agile and responsive approach to staffing, allowing departments to tailor recruitment efforts to their specific operational requirements. We support this effort to streamline government operations and ensure that our state agencies are staffed with the personnel necessary to fulfill their missions.

UHPA supports the passage of SB 2137.

Respectfully submitted,

Christian L. Fern
Executive Director
University of Hawaii Professional Assembly

**University of Hawaii
Professional Assembly**



UNITED PUBLIC WORKERS

AFSCME Local 646, AFL-CIO

THE SENATE
KA 'AHA KENEKOA

THE THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION OF 2026

COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND TECHNOLOGY

Senator Brandon J.C. Elefante, Chair
Senator Rachele Lamosao, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Senator Angus L.K. McKelvey, Chair
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

Monday, February 9, 2026, 3:00 PM
Conference Room 225 & Videoconference

Re: Testimony on SB2137 – RELATING TO PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT

Chairs Elefante and McKelvey, Vice Chairs Lamosao and Gabbard, and Members of the Committee:

The United Public Workers, AFSCME Local 646, AFL-CIO (“UPW”) is the exclusive bargaining representative for approximately 12,000 public employees, which includes blue collar, non-supervisory employees in Bargaining Unit 1 and institutional, health, and correctional employees in Bargaining Unit 10, in the State of Hawaii and various counties.

UPW **supports** SB2137, which authorizes state departments, divisions, and agencies to elect to assume hiring and recruitment functions from the Department of Human Resources Development (“DHRD”) for vacant civil service positions within that department, division, or agency under certain conditions. This measure also requires DHRD to adopt rules and repeals existing law authorizing state departments, divisions, and agencies to conduct minimum qualification review of applicants for their vacant civil service positions.

According to DHRD’s 2025 report to the Legislature, there are 4,273 vacant state positions, which represents a 24% vacancy rate. Since the establishment of Section 77-22.6, Hawaii Revised Statutes, in 2024, which was intended to give departments and agencies some flexibility in their hiring practices and cut down the time required to hire workers, the vacancy rate has shown little change. The large number of vacancies continues to impact public employees who are having to shoulder the workload of these unfilled positions. As the exclusive representative for Bargaining Units 1 and 10, we know this issue is contributing to burnout and separation from service. UPW is supporting this bill with the hope that giving the departments even greater autonomy during the hiring process will help them hire the employees they need.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this measure.

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AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO

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The Thirty-Third Legislature, State of Hawaii
The Senate
Committee on Labor and Technology
Committee on Government Operations

Testimony by
Hawaii Government Employees Association

February 9, 2026

S.B. 2137 — RELATING TO RELATING TO PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT

The Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO supports the purpose and intent of S.B. 2137, which authorizes state departments, divisions, and agencies to elect to assume hiring and recruitment functions from the Department of Human Resources Development for vacant civil service positions within that department, division, or agency under certain conditions.

We appreciate and applaud this initiative which would decentralize the recruitment and hiring of vacant civil service positions. There has been no improvement in our state's vacancy rate over these past few years, and many of our members continue to be overworked. This measure speaks to the larger issue about DHRD's centralized recruitment process – it's not adaptable or flexible at meeting the needs of the line-departments and the current market demands by not hiring qualified and prospective civil service employees efficiently. We urge the legislature to continue to focus its effort on improving our state's recruitment procedures as we continue to see high vacancy rates which has led to a reduction in services to the public and an increase/abuse of exempt positions within state government.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of S.B. 2137.

Respectfully submitted,

Randy Perreira
Executive Director