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

February 6, 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

Date: Friday, February 6, 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. 2198 RELATING TO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The **DLIR supports** this measure if it does not adversely impact priorities identified in the Governor's Executive Supplemental Budget Request. SB2198 seeks to develop a Hawaii-based program similar to the Meilleur Ouvrier de France (MOF). The DLIR believes that formally honoring and preserving high standards of craftsmanship, skill, and professionalism in various manual trades is an intriguing and valuable initiative. The MOF, established in 1924, recognized the best workers of the era with the title "Best Craftsman of France" and has since expanded to include awards in over 200 trades.

In the U.S., there is often a societal emphasis on college degrees and white-collar careers, which can sometimes overshadow the value of skilled trades. A Hawaii-based program like the MOF could elevate the importance and prestige of trades, promoting career paths that do not require a four-year college degree. This program would highlight the wide range of opportunities within the skilled labor market, helping to attract young people to apprenticeships and technical training programs.

One of the greatest benefits of a program like the MOF would be its ability to provide role models for younger generations. By showcasing workers who have achieved exceptional levels of mastery, the program could inspire youth to follow in their footsteps. These role models would help shift public perception of vocational and skilled trades, presenting them as prestigious and valuable career paths and encouraging young people to pursue these fields.