

ACT 101

H.B. NO. 316

A Bill for an Act Relating to the Green Jobs Youth Corps.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Hawaii:

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that youth and young adults commonly experience unemployment at higher rates than the general population. Prolonged youth unemployment can have profound negative impacts on the lifetime earnings and well-being of individuals, and action is needed to provide better work opportunities for Hawaii's youth and young adults.

The legislature also finds that the State has set ambitious goals in the areas of economic diversification, environmental management, and energy self-sufficiency. An important element of reaching these goals is investing in a workforce that is both skilled and experienced in sustainability-related professions.

The legislature notes that the Civilian Conservation Corps, a federal work relief program created during the Great Depression, employed Americans for conservation projects of local, state, and national benefit, providing opportunities for displaced young adults. While the Civilian Conservation Corps disbanded in 1942, the concept lives on through The Corps Network, a national association of service and conservation corps that provide opportunities for young adults and veterans to serve their communities and the environment.

The State also established the Hawaii youth conservation corps, a program that provides young individuals with opportunities in conservation on a smaller scale. This program currently operates within the policies set out under chapter 193, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

The legislature recognizes that Act 9, Session Laws of Hawaii 2020, appropriated funds designated for the State by the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act to establish a workforce and training program that, among other accomplishments, funded a short-term green jobs program in partnership with the Hawaii-based nonprofit organization Kupu Aina Corps

(Kupu). Kupu's partnership with conservation and agriculture host sites enabled individuals to work in their own communities while giving back to the State's economy and environment. Through this short-term program, over three hundred fifty displaced workers and recent graduates were matched with work and training opportunities across the State.

The legislature further recognizes that Act 181, Session Laws of Hawaii 2021, authorized the governor to designate the department of land and natural resources as the administrator of the State's green jobs youth corps program and provided funding for the administration of the program. In 2022, the legislature amended the requirements for this program and provided additional funding through Act 33, Session Laws of Hawaii 2022.

The legislature additionally finds that the green jobs youth corps program is an important part of the State's strategy to diversify the economy and reach its environmental and energy self-sufficiency goals. In addition, this program invests in building the human capital of young adults who are interested in working in sustainability-related professions. The legislature therefore finds great value in the continuation of the green jobs youth corps program, which requires additional funding.

Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to appropriate funds for the continuation of the green jobs youth corps program.

SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$2,000,000 or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 for the green jobs youth corps program; provided that, notwithstanding any law to the contrary, the department of land and natural resources and its partner or partners may obtain and utilize federal or other outside funding for the purpose of matching state funds provided for the green jobs youth corps program.

The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department of land and natural resources for the purposes of this Act.

SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

(Approved May 27, 2025.)