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WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Workforce Synergy Summit II

Meeting Minutes (Draft Summary)

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 | 8:00 AM – 12:00 Noon

Honolulu Community College, Building B, Second Floor, Loui Room

874 Dillingham Blvd, Honolulu, HI 96817

I. Call to Order / Roll Call

Timestamp: 00:00:02 – 00:04:38

The meeting was called to order at **8:31 AM** by **Chair Ken Loui**, following opening remarks by **Executive Director Bennette Misalucha**, who welcomed attendees to the Workforce Synergy Summit II. She reminded participants that the meeting was being conducted in accordance with Hawai'i's Sunshine Law and, per guidance from the Office of Information Practices, was being treated as an official meeting of the Workforce Development Council (WDC).

Chair Loui acknowledged and thanked attendees—especially those traveling from neighbor islands—and recognized **Vice Chair Cary Miyashiro** before beginning the agenda.

**Roll call** was conducted by **Angela Chock, Hele Imua Intern**. The following members were confirmed **present at roll call (21 total)**:

- **Amber Akana** – Union Representative, Seafarers International Union of North America
- **Gina Woo Anonuevo** – Vice Chair and CAO/CHRO, First Hawaiian Bank
- **Cheryl Cross** – Executive Search Consultant, Inkinen Executive Search

- **Keith DeMello** – SVP of Communications & External Affairs, Ulupono Initiative
- **Jared Higashi** – Vice President, Hawai'i Lodging and Tourism Association
- **Shelli Ihori** – Director of Workforce Development, Hawai'i Pacific Health
- **Wanelle Kaneshiro** – Director, Workforce Development Branch, Hawai'i Department of Education (Designee for Keith Hayashi)
- **Dan Kouchi** – Policy Advisor, Office of the Governor (Designee for Governor Josh Green)
- **Kehaulani Kukahiko** – Manager of Education & Workforce Development, Kaua'i Economic Development Board (Kaua'i Mayor's Representative)
- **Benson Medina** – Director, County of Hawai'i Dept. of Research and Development (Designee for Mayor Kimo Alameda)
- **Christopher Lum Lee** – Chair, O'ahu Workforce Development Board
- **David Rodriguez** – Equal Opportunity Officer, Dept. of Labor and Industrial Relations (Designee for Jade Butay)
- **Jade Rojas-Letisi** – Executive Assistant, Economic Development, Office of the Mayor (Designee for Mayor Richard Bissen)
- **Tui Scanlan** – President, IATSE Local 665
- **Della Teraoka** – Interim VP for Community Colleges, University of Hawai'i System (Designee for President Wendy Hensel)
- **Thomas Chock** – Program Specialist, DBEDT (Designee for Director James Tokioka)
- **Michelle Rego** – Representing Nalani Brun, Director, Office of Economic Development, County of Kaua'i
- **Cary Miyashiro** – President, Quad D Solutions; Vice Chair, Workforce Development Council
- **Ken Loui** – CEO, Pacific Marine; Chair, Workforce Development Council
- **Lorna Woo** – Director of Government Affairs, IUPAT District Council 50
- **Rosella Guardascione** – Chair, Hawai'i County Workforce Development Board

The following members were **officially excused**:

- **Scott Collins** – Field Services Officer, Hawai'i Government Employees Association (HGEA)
- **Sen. Donovan Dela Cruz** – Senator, Hawai'i State Senate; Assistant Vice Chair, WDC
- **Rona Fukumoto** – President & CEO, Lanakila Pacific
- **Rep. Andrew Garrett** – State House of Representatives
- **Derek Kanehira** – SVP, Human Resources, Alexander & Baldwin
- **Andy Kawano** – Director, Dept. of Budget and Fiscal Services, City & County of Honolulu (Designee for Mayor Rick Blangiardi)
- **Carla Kurokawa** – Employment & Training Manager, Alu Like, Inc.
- **Robert Lietzke** – Vice President, Booz Allen Hamilton
- **Pane Meatoga III** – Deputy Political Director, Operating Engineers Local 3
- **Trang Malone** – Manager, Workforce Initiatives, CVS Health
- **Sean Nakamura** – Corporate Controller and Treasurer, TradeWind Group

The following members were **not present**.

- **Manu Bermudes** – VP of Human Resources, Hawai'i Gas
- **Sean Knox** – President, Hawai'i Employment Services Inc.

The following members **joined after roll call and were not included in the initial quorum count**:

- **Lea Dias** – Administrator, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, DHS
- **Dion Dizon** – Director, UH West O'ahu Center for Labor Education and Research
- **Leslie Wilkins** – Chair, Maui Workforce Development Board; President, Maui Economic Development Board

#### **Quorum Verification:**

Chair Loui confirmed quorum based on **21 members present at roll call**.

Chair Loui then returned the proceedings to **Executive Director Bennette Misalucha** to continue with the agenda.

## II. Aloha and Greetings

**Timestamp: 00:04:38 – 00:13:01**

**Executive Director Bennette Misalucha** opened the next portion of the meeting with a brief acknowledgment of the venue. She then conveyed formal greetings on behalf of **Governor Josh Green**, who was unable to attend. She shared that the Governor’s policy team has been closely following WDC’s efforts and acknowledged the attendance of his designee, **Dan Kouchi**, Policy Advisor from the Office of the Governor.

Bennette then invited **Dan Doerger**, Director of the Pacific Center for Advanced Technology Training (PCATT) at **Honolulu Community College (HCC)**, to offer a welcome on behalf of the campus. Doerger shared that PCATT operates across all seven UH community colleges, although his office is located on the 5th floor of the same building as the event. He welcomed attendees warmly and emphasized HCC’s reputation as “the campus that builds Hawai‘i.” He described the workforce training programs housed throughout the building—including architecture, engineering, construction, early childhood education, computer science, and advanced manufacturing in partnership with the U.S. Navy. He encouraged attendees to explore the campus and acknowledged the many industry partners in the room.

Afterward, **Bennette Misalucha** invited **Christine Sakuda**, the State’s **Chief Information Officer and Administrator of the Office of Enterprise Technology Services**, to share remarks. Sakuda thanked the Governor and Comptroller **Keith Regan** for her appointment, noting that she has served in the CIO role for just under a year. She described efforts underway to build a modern, resilient, and skilled public-sector workforce prepared to handle challenges in **cybersecurity, AI, and data governance**. She highlighted the work of the **Chief Data Officer**, the **Data Task Force**, and a **new Data Working Group** launched through recent legislation. Sakuda expressed excitement about aligning these efforts with workforce development initiatives and emphasized the importance of continued collaboration across state departments.

## III. Agenda Overview

Although listed as an item on the agenda, a formal agenda overview was **skipped during this portion of the meeting**. A broader overview of the day’s schedule and objectives was provided later in the program instead.

## IV. Remarks

**Timestamp: 00:13:23 – 00:41:37**

**(00:13:23)** Executive Director Bennette Misalucha opened the formal remarks by recognizing Ken Loui, Chair of the Workforce Development Council and CEO of Pacific Marine, for his consistent dedication and responsiveness to workforce issues across Hawai‘i. She praised his behind-the-scenes leadership and support of the Synergy Summit vision.

**(00:13:54)** Ken Loui then offered opening reflections, reiterating the importance of the Council’s mandate to go beyond meetings and move toward action. He emphasized the necessity of data-informed strategy and sustained collaboration to address the evolving needs of Hawai‘i’s workforce. Loui also thanked all attendees for showing up with intention and encouraged everyone to use the Summit as a springboard for coordinated, cross-sector engagement.

**(00:16:33)** Following Loui’s remarks, Sophia Yager, Senior Workforce Policy Advisor, offered remarks on behalf of the National Governors Association. She affirmed the support for WDC’s work and spoke to the alignment between state policy priorities and the cross-agency workforce development strategies being advanced. Yager highlighted the importance of creating workforce pathways grounded in equity and economic resilience, emphasizing that workforce development is not peripheral but central to the future of Hawai‘i’s economy.

**(00:18:47)** Bennette Misalucha returned to the podium to reflect on the meaning of synergy as the Summit’s guiding theme. She encouraged attendees to embrace collaboration that goes beyond surface-level coordination—urging them to seek alignment in values, language, and outcomes. Misalucha emphasized that true synergy means recognizing that no single agency or system can do this work alone.

### **Interactive Segment 1: Mentimeter Polling with Dan Doerger**

**(00:20:13)** To help frame that collective vision, Dan Doerger facilitated a live Mentimeter activity where participants responded to prompts such as “What does workforce mean to you?” and “What does synergy look like in action?” Their answers formed real-time word clouds projected on screen, highlighting key themes like opportunity, equity, kuleana, collaboration, and future. The activity was lighthearted yet reflective, helping to build energy and shared understanding among participants. Bennette followed up with additional remarks, noting how the responses demonstrated the passion and diverse perspectives in the room, and reinforcing that the day’s success depended on everyone’s willingness to lean into this shared work.

**(00:32:31)** Tui Scanlan, President of IATSE Local 665 and WDC member, then shared personal and powerful reflections rooted in his experiences. He spoke about the barriers working families face, from systemic gaps in access to opportunity to cultural disconnects in workforce systems. Drawing from his own family's story—his father's journey through trades work, and the pride in being able to support his 'ohana—Tui emphasized how generational change happens when systems truly invest in people.

He reminded attendees that while policies and partnerships are important, it's the stories of real individuals that give this work meaning. Tui called for a shift from transactional programming to transformative systems, rooted in community, kuleana, and pilina. His message was both emotional and energizing, inviting the room to lean into discomfort, challenge the status quo, and reimagine what a people-first workforce system in Hawai'i could look like.

This series of remarks underscored key themes for the day: systems-level collaboration, equity-centered policy, and the urgent need to act—not just plan. The tone was both pragmatic and hopeful, setting a clear charge for attendees to engage meaningfully throughout the Summit.

## **V. The Four Pillars: An Overview of the State Unified Plan**

**Timestamp: 00:41:37 – 00:48:03**

Executive Director Bennette Misalucha introduced the State Unified Plan by explaining that, in order to continue receiving federal WIOA funds, every state—including Hawai'i—must submit a comprehensive workforce plan every four years. Hawai'i's most recent plan was submitted in March 2024 and received federal approval in June. Bennette emphasized that this Summit represents a key moment in the implementation phase, building on work that began well before the plan's submission, including early stakeholder engagement in October 2023.

She acknowledged that WDC is not the only entity developing strategic plans in this space—organizations like the Department of Education, UH P-20, DBEDT, DLIR, Perkins, and the Workforce Funders Collaborative have also been actively aligning workforce priorities. Recognizing this collective energy, Bennette highlighted the importance of true synergy: not just coordination, but values- and outcomes-aligned collaboration across sectors.

In a spontaneous moment, Bennette invited Josh Wisch of the Holomua Collective to share about his organization's mission to ensure working families can afford to stay in Hawai'i. He emphasized Holomua's growing role in workforce development and affirmed their

commitment to partnership—not duplication—echoing the Summit’s theme of alignment and shared action.

Bennette then introduced the four core pillars of Hawai‘i’s State Unified Plan, each led by a Catalyst Team: (1) ensure alignment with economic growth, (2) strengthen Hawai‘i’s education and training alliances, (3) eliminate barriers to career success, and (4) create workforce synergy in our community. She explained that the Plan was never meant to sit on a shelf—it’s a living document that reflects Hawai‘i’s evolving needs and shared responsibility.

She also walked participants through a timeline of the Plan’s implementation milestones. The July 2025 pulse check (represented by the Summit) would be followed by a statewide launch in September during Workforce Development Month—anticipated to be marked by a proclamation from Governor Green—and a formal implementation report to the Governor and DLIR in December.

Bennette concluded the section by defining a “catalyst” as something that accelerates change without being consumed in the process. With that framing, she introduced the first pillar presentation.

## **VI. Pillar Presentations**

**Total Timestamp: 00:47:34 – 01:53:05**

### **Pillar I: Aligning With Economic Development**

**Timestamp: 00:47:34 – 01:02:13**

*Presented by Dan Doerger and Thomas Chock*

Dan Doerger and Thomas Chock opened the first pillar presentation by reflecting on their team’s series of discussions and meetings that began at the December 2024 Synergy Summit. Their work centered on five key workforce development topics: defining what workforce development means in the current landscape, addressing labor shortages, identifying living wage strategies, supporting economic diversification, and preparing for future-ready jobs.

Dan began by unpacking the complexity of defining workforce development, particularly in terms of how existing sector partnerships play a role. Their team considered whether to focus efforts on sectors already organized—such as healthcare, IT, creative industries, and clean energy—or to expand into new or struggling sectors lacking formal partnerships. He emphasized the importance of strategic sector prioritization and leadership to grow and sustain effective collaborations.

Thomas followed with broader reflections on recurring themes that surfaced throughout their pillar work. The first was the critical need for better data access and usage—citing tools like Lightcast and state data systems to support employer outreach, identify skill gaps, and track migration patterns across industries. He noted that workforce strategies must align closely with those in Pillar II (education and training), emphasizing a dynamic push-pull between supply and demand.

In the discussion of living wages, Thomas highlighted how the team’s conversation extended beyond just pay scales. The group explored how non-monetary benefits and quality-of-life considerations (e.g., flexibility, wellness, culture) can add tangible value to jobs. They also floated the idea of a Living Wage Summit to engage employers on this broader understanding of what it means to thrive in Hawai‘i’s workforce.

Economic diversification was another recurring topic. The team challenged attendees to shift from viewing Hawai‘i’s geography as a limitation to recognizing it as a unique asset. They discussed ways to pilot new initiatives, take cues from other sectors, and leverage opportunities like AI and renewable energy to reimagine tourism and other legacy industries.

Finally, Thomas introduced the team’s conversation around “future-ready jobs,” encouraging bold thinking beyond existing labor data. He stressed the value of working with younger generations and fostering entrepreneurship and soft skills development—such as communication, critical thinking, and self-starting—to prepare the next workforce. His reflections ended with a call to better align training with job opportunities and equip people with tools for adaptability in a changing economy.

Dan and Thomas closed with mutual appreciation and thanks to the pillar participants and WDC leadership. Their presentation reflected the spirit of proactive, cross-sector collaboration that underpins the State Unified Plan.

## **Pillar II: Strengthening Alliances with Education and Training Providers**

**Timestamp: 01:02:14 – 01:10:37**

*Presented by Keala Monaco and Wanelle Kaneshiro*

Keala Monaco (University of Hawai‘i Community Colleges) and Wanelle Kaneshiro (Hawai‘i State Department of Education) shared updates from Pillar II, which focuses on strengthening education-to-industry alignment. Unlike other pillars still building momentum, Pillar II leveraged existing collaboration between major public education systems in the state—many of which are already engaged in workforce pipeline work.



Their team began by ranking pillar objectives, identifying top priorities such as aligning workforce training with industry needs and deepening collaboration between education institutions and employers. Keala emphasized the need for credentials that are meaningful, portable, and employer-recognized, noting that real-world relevance must guide curriculum development.

Wanelle detailed current strategies already in place, including advisory boards and sector councils that allow for industry-informed curriculum development. She outlined efforts across K–12 and post-secondary systems to expand credentialing, work-based learning, and apprenticeship programs. The focus is on ensuring students earn industry-recognized certifications before entering the workforce and that classrooms simulate real work environments—such as through clinical settings developed in partnership with the Healthcare Association of Hawai‘i.

Wraparound services like paid internships, financial aid, and student support were also highlighted as essential for learner success. The team’s strategy statement underscored coordinated earn-and-learn models and work-based training opportunities across all education levels to ensure smoother transitions into meaningful employment.

The presenters closed with a clear, ongoing commitment to this work—noting that, while there may not be a flashy “next step,” it is their daily mission to strengthen education-industry alignment. They invited industry partners to proactively reach out, reaffirming their intention to continue building bridges from the classroom to career pathways.

## **Interactive Segment 2: Mentimeter Polling with Dan Doerger**

**Timestamp: 01:10:29 – 01:19:06**

Dan Doerger facilitated a second interactive Mentimeter session to gather audience reflections between pillar presentations. Participants shared which pillar aligned most with their work, with many connecting strongly to education and training. A light-hearted poll asked what movie genre best described the workforce system—most chose “drama,” capturing the complexity and unpredictability of the work.

Additional prompts invited attendees to select “magic powers” they’d use to improve workforce outcomes—top choices included living wages, childcare access, and free college. When asked how they’d invest \$10 million, participants prioritized sector partnerships, affordable housing, and apprenticeship programs.

Dan emphasized that while these ideas may seem aspirational, everyone in the room has the power to make incremental change. The session ended with appreciation from Bennette and a transition to the third pillar presentation.

Absolutely — here is the revised and expanded summary for **Pillar III**, formatted to match the previous pillar summaries:

### **Pillar III: Eliminating Barriers to Career Success**

**Timestamp: 01:19:24 – 01:30:50**

*Presented by Cheryl Cross*

Cheryl Cross, speaking on behalf of herself and her co-chair Rona Fukumoto, opened the third pillar presentation with heartfelt gratitude and reflection. Acknowledging that this point in the day could bring fatigue, she re-centered the room by restating the pillar's core purpose: eliminating barriers to career success and eradicating stigma. Cheryl clarified that while this work was previously framed under "DEI," the team had broadened their scope in alignment with evolving federal language, choosing instead to focus on inclusion and barrier removal across all populations.

She emphasized that the pillar's work was not about prioritizing one group over another but about lifting everyone collectively. Cheryl reflected on the personal motivations that drive council members, sharing that beyond policy mandates, their stories and "why" are what truly give the work purpose.

Pillar III focused on five core barriers: access to childcare, transportation, digital infrastructure, justice involvement, and disability inclusion. Cheryl spoke to the reality that while many services already exist across the state, they are often siloed or disconnected. The priority moving forward, she shared, is building a more coordinated and connected system of services, especially for those most in need.

The team engaged in multiple working sessions and reviewed best practices from other states, including Oregon's PRISM system and Econoview tools used in California, Florida, and Texas. These data systems provide models for tracking outcomes, guiding planning, and identifying employer needs—systems Cheryl suggested Hawai'i could learn from to move toward a coordinated referral and data framework.

Their preliminary proposal includes securing funding for a statewide gaps analysis by 2026, with the goal of understanding and closing disconnects across agencies, regions, and programs. Cheryl emphasized that this effort must include collaboration with nonprofit providers and community organizations already doing effective work. Rather than

reinventing the wheel, she asked: “How might we better align and amplify what's already working?”

She closed with a personal call to action, inviting everyone in the room to reflect on what they could do differently to contribute to a more equitable workforce system. Whether through service on commissions or by bringing new voices to the table, Cheryl reminded attendees that meaningful change happens when people step forward with purpose and connection.

#### **Pillar IV: Creating Workforce Synergies in our Community**

**Timestamp: 01:30:56 – 01:53:05**

Before launching into the final pillar presentation, Executive Director Bennette Misalucha previewed the flow of the remaining agenda and invited Director of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) Jimmy Tokioka to the stage for unscheduled remarks. Tokioka reflected on DBEDT’s evolving role in connecting the business community with state agencies and reiterated workforce as the business community’s top concern. He expressed DBEDT’s commitment to supporting cross-sector workforce initiatives while “staying out of the way” to allow community partners to lead. Tokioka acknowledged the unique challenges faced by the neighbor islands and pledged to help bridge those gaps by connecting local opportunities with state resources.

**(1:36:36)** Following his remarks, Pillar IV Catalyst Keala Peters introduced the team’s work on **creating workforce synergy**, emphasizing that this pillar builds on years of collaboration and shared goals among workforce partners. She framed the work as moving beyond planning toward **alignment, integration, and impact**. Peters outlined three main priority activities:

1. **Cataloging existing initiatives and identifying gaps**
2. **Utilizing data to guide strategy**
3. **Developing and introducing a unifying North Star goal (Generational Commitment)**

She noted that although the North Star effort alone could account for multiple initiatives, the group focused on these three strategic areas to move the collective work forward.

Matt Stevens then elaborated on the first two priorities. He explained that the team’s first task was to inventory existing efforts across the workforce pipeline and identify

disconnects and inefficiencies. Their group intentionally participated in other pillar meetings to enhance alignment and cross-pollination.

On the second priority—**data**—Stevens described how the team used existing datasets to map the education-to-employment pipeline, highlighting that while many students graduate high school, only a small percentage secure college-level employment within five years. Their analysis revealed that even with increased attainment, Hawai‘i’s **wage outcomes** remain the lowest in the nation—especially for those with college degrees—underscoring a **structural wage challenge**.

The data confirmed that systemic change is necessary and helped sharpen the framing of the North Star goal, which Stevens described as a bold and aspirational effort to drive long-term, people-first outcomes. He concluded by passing the floor back to Peters for the final priority.

Peters closed the presentation by describing the evolution of the North Star framework and its transition to the language of “**Generational Commitment**.” She outlined the collaborative process—including five working group meetings between November 2024 and May 2025—that shaped the goal’s development. These meetings involved agencies such as the DOE, UH, DLIR, DBEDT, philanthropic funders, and national experts. Peters emphasized the intent to build a multidimensional, equity-focused umbrella that unifies efforts across the education, workforce, and economic sectors—one that can serve as both a **strategic direction and rallying point** for cross-sector collaboration.

This presentation seamlessly transitioned into the unveiling of the North Star goal in the next agenda item.

## **VII. Unveiling of the North Star: Hawai‘i’s Generational Commitment**

**Timestamp: 01:53:23–02:06:08**

Executive Director **Bennette Misalucha** introduced *Hawai‘i’s Generational Commitment*, the result of six months of collaboration between workforce stakeholders, with support from the National Governors Association. She emphasized the value of creating a unifying vision that supports diverse efforts across agencies and communities, drawing inspiration from the clean energy sector’s North Star goal. The unveiled statement reads:

**“By 2045, all people of Hawai‘i will have a path to a career that enables them to learn, work, and thrive in Hawai‘i and contribute to a vibrant local economy grounded in community values.”**

Bennette emphasized the importance of belonging, which emerged as the central theme in the overlapping values of learning, working, and thriving.

**Keala Peters** then elaborated on the deep, intentional conversations that shaped the language and structure of the statement. She shared insights on each component—from the inclusive phrase “all people of Hawai‘i” to the emphasis on non-traditional career pathways and community-grounded economic development. Keala also introduced the Hawaiian values translation: *Ao, Hana, Ola – Learn, Work, Thrive*.

**Matt Stevens** followed with a breakdown of the measurable framework behind the commitment. He described four “impact buckets” that will guide ongoing evaluation:

- Work-based access and infrastructure
- Economic development and opportunity
- Job quality and underemployment
- Belonging and hope

Matt previewed draft metrics aligned with each category, emphasizing the importance of building on existing data while identifying gaps. He noted that while this framework is still evolving, it will be refined to ensure alignment with state agency goals and serve as a tool for long-term accountability.

Bennette concluded the unveiling with closing remarks and announced a 15-minute break.

### **Break: 02:06:08 – 02:21:47**

During the break, attendees viewed a few locally produced **American Job Center promotional ads** currently running in Hawai‘i, showcasing workforce resources available through the AJCs.

### **Interactive Segment 3: Mentimeter Polling with Dan Doerger**

#### **Timestamp: 02:21:47 – 02:29:27**

Dan Doerger facilitated the final Mentimeter segment of the Summit, inviting participants to reflect on the newly unveiled generational commitment. The first prompt asked attendees which part of the commitment resonated most with them. Popular responses included its emphasis on alignment across education, workforce, and community; its generational focus; and the long-term, collective responsibility it embodies.

The next prompt encouraged participants to describe the role they see themselves playing in fulfilling the commitment. Responses ranged from advocates, funders, and utility players to more symbolic roles like “bridge builders” and “janitors,” reflecting both practical and metaphorical contributions to the shared vision.

Attendees were then asked which of the four intentions—learn, work, thrive, belong—felt most urgent to act on. “Thrive” emerged as the top priority, affirming the collective desire for residents to not only stay in Hawai‘i but to truly flourish here.

The final question, a word cloud, asked participants to describe how the commitment made them feel. Responses included “hopeful,” “inspired,” “energized,” and “focused,” highlighting the optimism and motivation in the room as participants looked toward next steps.

## **VIII. Panel Discussion: How Can Our Organizations Align Our Efforts with Hawai‘i’s Generational Commitment?**

**Timestamp: 02:29:30 – 03:07:04**

The panel discussion, facilitated by Sophia Yager (Governor’s Office) and supported by Malena Dailey (National Governors Association), invited representatives from the education, nonprofit, and philanthropic sectors to reflect on how their organizations see themselves in the Generational Commitment and what concrete actions are needed to align efforts moving forward.

(02:31:33) **Tammi Chun-Oyadomari** (Deputy Superintendent, Hawai‘i Department of Education) opened the panel by grounding the Generational Commitment in a 20-year timeline. She explained that today’s kindergarteners will be 25 in 2045, and current high school graduates will be nearing 40. This perspective helped frame the urgency of aligning education and workforce systems for the next generation.

Chun-Oyadomari highlighted the DOE’s efforts to update the “Vision of a Hawai‘i Public School Graduate,” which will guide revisions to diploma requirements and help align K–12 education with the evolving demands of the workforce. She emphasized that this is not just a Department of Education responsibility, but a broader community commitment that includes families, employers, and institutions across Hawai‘i.

She also shared sobering insights from DOE student focus groups. In one session with 30 high school student leaders, only three said they expected to still be living in Hawai‘i at age 40. Students cited limited job opportunities, high costs of living, and the belief that success

requires moving away. These findings underscored the emotional and economic weight students carry as they imagine their futures.

Despite the challenges, Chun-Oyadomari expressed hope. The few students who said they plan to stay cited their deep sense of kuleana and connection to Hawai'i. She called on attendees to shift the narrative around success and build real pathways for youth to thrive locally. She ended by encouraging stronger educator-employer connections so teachers can better guide students based on current industry realities, and affirmed DOE's continued commitment to collaboration.

(02:42:01) **Christine Beaule** (Director of Systemwide Academic and Student Affairs, University of Hawai'i System) shared a candid and personal reflection on the disconnect between higher education's promises and the outcomes experienced by too many graduates. Drawing from her own journey as a first-generation college student from a background of poverty, she acknowledged the hope that education offers—but also highlighted the systemic failures that prevent many students from reaching their potential.

Beaule pointed to sobering trends: many UH graduates are underemployed, working in jobs unrelated to their degrees, while employers struggle to find job-ready talent. She noted a growing mismatch between the skills students are gaining and the opportunities available to them, especially for graduates outside of clearly defined career pipelines like nursing or engineering.

She emphasized the need for major systemic shifts—such as embedding career readiness and industry engagement across all academic programs—to ensure every graduate, including those in liberal arts or less directly vocational majors, is equipped for success in Hawai'i's workforce. Beaule called for higher education to become a more productive partner in the economic system, with institutions intentionally building pathways to jobs and helping students co-create the opportunities of tomorrow. Her remarks ended on a note of urgency and vision: transforming the structure of higher education to ensure it fulfills its promise for all students.

(02:47:54) **Kathy Matayoshi** (Hawai'i Workforce Funders Collaborative) offered a philanthropic perspective on the importance of aligning efforts across sectors. She explained that the Collaborative was created to address a major challenge: excellent workforce initiatives were happening in silos, with little communication or collective impact. By coming together as a group of nine philanthropic organizations, they sought to foster collaboration and sustain efforts that would be difficult to scale individually.

Matayoshi emphasized that the Generational Commitment serves as a unifying “North Star” that allows partners to work on their individual priorities while still aligning around

shared metrics, values, and long-term goals. She stressed the importance of remembering historically underserved populations—including rural, neighbor island, and low-income communities—that often fall through the cracks when success is measured solely through O‘ahu-based or aggregate statistics.

She also noted the importance of career pathways, not just entry-level jobs. Many workers in high-poverty areas may be working multiple jobs without ever reaching economic stability. Matayoshi explained that the Funders Collaborative is focused on supporting communities beyond the first job—ensuring that opportunities exist for advancement and long-term success.

Finally, she shared insights from youth focus groups funded by the Collaborative. These young people emphasized that meaningful work—rather than just high wages—was central to their definition of a good job. They wanted to support their families, stay rooted in their communities, and live in alignment with their values. Matayoshi concluded that this deeper understanding of community and purpose is key to creating a vibrant local economy, and affirmed the Collaborative’s strong support for the Generational Commitment as a framework to unify and guide that vision.

(02:52:05) **Stephen Schatz** (Hawai‘i P-20 Partnerships for Education) spoke about the evolving role of Hawai‘i P-20 as a coordinating body that works to align the state’s education systems with workforce needs. Though housed at the University of Hawai‘i, P-20 operates as a neutral intermediary and facilitator across the Department of Education, higher education, and other workforce stakeholders.

Schatz noted a significant shift in formal plans and infrastructure across agencies over the last decade: both the University of Hawai‘i and the DOE now have designated workforce offices, metrics, and strategic plans that reflect workforce alignment as a core goal—something that didn’t exist ten years ago. He emphasized that these aren’t just plans—they include accountability mechanisms, and he pointed to the Generational Commitment as another powerful framework with shared metrics.

He also spoke to how funding strategies are starting to reflect these commitments. For example, federal Perkins funds and philanthropic resources are now being deployed in new ways, showing that the plans are beginning to translate into action.

A key area of progress Schatz highlighted was **work-based learning (WBL)**. In partnership with philanthropy and DOE, P-20 has helped expand WBL opportunities statewide—from O‘ahu to neighbor islands—offering everything from career fairs to internships and apprenticeships for middle and high school students. He shared that a recent state legislative appropriation to DOE will help sustain this expansion.



However, he acknowledged a gap: while Hawai'i has scaled access to WBL, alignment with priority industries remains an area for improvement. Schatz emphasized the need to strategically target sectors like healthcare, education, IT, and skilled trades—areas with good wages and strong potential for local retention.

He concluded by referencing P-20's previous goal—**"55 by 25"**—which aimed to have 55% of working-age adults in Hawai'i earn a degree by 2025. While that target wasn't fully met, their new goal, **"Hawai'i Graduates for Hawai'i's Future,"** is directly aligned with the Generational Commitment. The vision now is to empower local students to shape Hawai'i's future while also having the opportunity to live, work, and thrive here themselves.

(02:57:15) **Christine Beaulé** expanded on how the University of Hawai'i is rethinking its definition of “quality jobs” to align with the Generational Commitment. While a livable **paycheck** is foundational, she emphasized that a quality job also provides **meaning, stability, and a future**. She outlined **five systemic priorities** that UH is focusing on to support learners and improve outcomes:

1. **Seamless transitions:** Ensuring learners—from high school graduates to adults displaced by AI—can move between non-credit, certificate, and degree programs **without losing credits or starting over**.
2. **Alignment with workforce needs:** Increasing coordination between educators and employers to match **training with real labor market demands**, including AI skills, communication, and entrepreneurship.
3. **Embedded career readiness:** Integrating career exposure and preparation **early and often** in every student's journey, regardless of major.
4. **Accessible data:** Democratizing access to **career and wage information** for students, families, and faculty so informed decisions can be made about educational and career paths.
5. **Entrepreneurship and innovation:** Expanding micro-credentials, industry-recognized certifications, and support for **economic diversification** through alumni and community engagement.

To close the session, **Sophia Yager** asked each panelist to share a 30-second reflection on what **"belonging"** means in the context of the Generational Commitment.

- **Kathy Matayoshi** shared that belonging means being **connected and contributing** to your community while learning. She also gave a “shout out” to new preliminary data from YouHero's Good Jobs Initiative, which shows **positive wage impacts** for participants, especially those who changed sectors. She emphasized that **tracking**

**data and seeing real change** is what makes the work energizing—and that **inclusion leads to belonging**.

- **Christine Beaulé** said belonging means that whatever your **passion or talent**, you can see how to **apply it in service of your community, family, and ‘āina**—and feel empowered to make a difference where you live.
- **Tammi Chun-Oyadomari** (Department of Education) emphasized that belonging is central to DOE’s values and practices. Referencing **Nā Hopena A’o (HĀ)**, she noted that **"B" for belonging** is the first principle in the acrostic, underscoring its importance in how DOE supports **students, staff, families, and partners** in education.
- **Stephen Schatz** (P-20) provided a more sobering perspective, highlighting that belonging and thriving are not possible without **economic viability**. He reminded the room that **Hawai‘i’s high cost of living** poses a serious barrier—many young people simply **can’t afford to stay**, regardless of how strong their community ties are. He urged educators and workforce leaders to factor **affordability and job viability** into conversations about belonging, suggesting we ask youth not just “what do you want to be?” but also “**where do you want to live?**”

## **IX. Next Steps in Hawai‘i’s Generational Commitment Journey**

*Presented by Bennette Misalucha and Matt Stevens*

**Timestamp: 03:07:04 – 03:11:06**

Bennette Misalucha opened the segment by outlining the immediate steps following the public preview of Hawai‘i’s Generational Commitment. She noted the need to align divergent efforts under a unified mission and emphasized a phased rollout process. July through September will focus on stakeholder engagement and internal preparation to ensure that when the Governor formally announces the initiative during Workforce Development Month in September, key partners will already be familiar with the framework. Conversations will continue through the fall to address potential policy changes and funding requirements that may involve both public and private sector support.

Matthew Stevens added that the Pillar 4 Catalyst team is forming a data working group to define leading metrics and cross-sector indicators. The group will begin by identifying what can be measured immediately and where data gaps exist. He invited agencies with relevant expertise to join these conversations to help establish a shared foundation for tracking progress and outcomes.

## **X. Statewide Funding Map: Resources and Priorities**

**Timestamp: 03:11:06 – 03:22:11**

*Presented by Matt Stevens, Executive Director, Hawai'i Workforce Funders Collaborative*

Matt Stevens presented the newly released **Workforce Funding Review Report**, a joint effort between the Hawai'i Workforce Funders Collaborative and the Workforce Development Council. This project updates a 2018 study and responds to changes in funding landscapes, including pandemic recovery, evolving state priorities, and shifts in federal resources. The report maps out both federal and local workforce development funding and offers a visual breakdown of where funds are going by agency, service type (e.g., education, support services, work-based learning), and population served.

Key findings include over **\$1.3 billion** in workforce-related federal funding to Hawai'i in 2023, with support services and work-based learning making up the largest shares. The report also highlights limitations in current data systems, such as the lack of standardized workforce development codes and fragmented accounting across agencies.

Stevens outlined three primary opportunities moving forward: (1) leveraging the state's new data governance initiative, (2) improving connected data systems and metrics, and (3) aligning fiscal coding to enhance transparency. He encouraged attendees to use the report to spark statewide conversations about collaboration, funding priorities, and strategic alignment with Hawai'i's Generational Commitment.

Bennette Misalucha closed by noting that the presentation slides are available on the Workforce Development Council website and the full report can be accessed through the Hawai'i Workforce Funders Collaborative website.

## **XI. Youth Speaker – Angela Chock, Hele Imua Intern, Workforce Development Council**

**Timestamp: 3:23:35 – 3:32:36**

Bennette Misalucha introduced youth speaker Angela Chock, expressing that the word “hope” came to mind when reflecting on Hawai'i's Generational Commitment. She emphasized the importance of hearing from the next generation, noting Angela's significant contributions as the Hele Imua Intern, including creating all the visual slides for the Summit.

Angela Chock shared a heartfelt and personal reflection on her journey as a Native Hawaiian student, intern, and aspiring researcher. She spoke about her family's move from Utah to Hawai'i, her experience reconnecting with her cultural roots at Kamehameha

Schools, and the opportunity provided by the Hele Imua program to return home and work with the Workforce Development Council. Her remarks centered around the question, “What kind of Hawai‘i do you want to live in 20 years from now?”

Angela envisioned a Hawai‘i where she can live comfortably, afford housing and groceries, raise a family, and feel a strong sense of belonging. She drew attention to socioeconomic challenges such as the Native Hawaiian diaspora and income disparities, which she has studied through sociology and statistics research. Despite these challenges, she affirmed her hope and commitment to remaining in Hawai‘i and contributing to a more just, equitable, and inclusive society.

## **XII. Closing – Ken Loui, Chair, Workforce Development Council**

**Timestamp: 3:32:37**

Chair Ken Loui closed the event with words of appreciation and inspiration, stating that a meaningful life includes moments of laughter, tears, and love—acknowledging contributions from speakers Tui, Angela, and Dan as providing those moments throughout the day. He expressed pride in the work being done and hope for what lies ahead. Ken reminded attendees that the next WDC meeting is scheduled for August 20 from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m., open to the public.

## **XIII. Adjournment**

**Timestamp: 3:33:18**

With no further business, the meeting was officially adjourned at 12:02 pm.