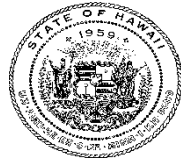


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

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

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

830 PUNCHBOWL STREET, ROOM 317
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

<http://labor.hawaii.gov/labor> Phone: (808) 586-8815 / Fax: (808) 586-8822

Email: dlir.workforce.council@hawaii.gov

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Special Projects Committee Meeting Minutes Summary

Date: June 30, 2025

Time: 3:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Location: Zoom & 830 Punchbowl Street, Room 317, Honolulu, HI 96813

I. Call to Order and Roll Call

[Timestamp: 00:00:33 – 00:06:07]

Chair Keith DeMello called the meeting to order at 3:01 p.m. and welcomed attendees to the Special Projects Committee meeting of the Workforce Development Council. He acknowledged Vice Chair Dion Dizon and noted that the meeting was being held in accordance with Hawai'i's Sunshine Law, with participation available remotely via Zoom and in person at 830 Punchbowl Street, Room 317, Honolulu.

Chair DeMello invited participants to introduce themselves for the record. Introductions were provided verbally and supplemented by the Zoom attendance list.

WDC Committee Members Present:

- Keith DeMello, Chair – Workforce Development Council
- Dion Dizon, Vice Chair – UH West O'ahu Center for Labor Education and Research (CLEAR)
- Thomas Chock – DBEDT Creative Industries Division
- David Rodriguez – Hawai'i Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR)
- Jade Rojas-Letisi – Office of Economic Development, County of Maui

WDC Staff Present:

- Bennette Misalucha – Executive Director, Workforce Development Council
- Angela Chock – Hele Imua Intern, Workforce Development Council
- Kelly Quitevis – Staff, Workforce Development Council

Presenters:

- Caroline Witherspoon – President & CEO, Becker Communications
- Jocelyn Collado – Vice President, Becker Communications

Guests and Additional Attendees:

- Julie Radke – Fiscal Office, DLIR
- Carey Price – Program Specialist, DLIR Director's Office
- Maricar Pilotin-Freitas – Workforce Development Division
- Nicolette van der Lee – Program Manager, UH Community Colleges
- Chavonnie Ramos – Public Information Officer, DLIR
- Ariel Nault – Fiscal Office, DLIR
- Leinaala Nakamura – Office of Community Services, County of Kaua'i
- Ray Solaris – Director of Career Services, Goodwill Industries
- Kevin Aki Jr. – County of Hawai'i, Research and Development Workforce Division

II. Presentation: Public Awareness Campaign Overview

[Timestamp: 00:06:07 – 00:41:32]

Presented by: Caroline Witherspoon and Jocelyn Collado, Becker Communications

Chair Keith DeMello introduced the second agenda item: a presentation by Becker Communications outlining the statewide public relations campaign designed to increase awareness and utilization of Hawai'i's American Job Centers (AJCs). The campaign is funded using unexpended Program Year 2022 WIOA funds.

Caroline Witherspoon and Jocelyn Collado led the presentation, beginning with a summary of a statewide omnibus survey conducted by Anthology Research. The survey revealed that 81% of Hawai'i residents had never heard of AJC Hawai'i, and even among active job seekers, 72% were unaware of the services. However, of those who had used AJC services,

65% indicated they would be very likely to use them again, showing a need to bridge the awareness gap.

Key points from the survey findings included:

- Awareness is higher on O'ahu compared to the neighbor islands.
- Males, Caucasians, college graduates, and those under 50 had higher awareness and usage rates.

Based on the findings, Becker developed a multi-channel campaign titled "If I Can, You Can" featuring:

- Television & Streaming Ads: Two TV spots highlighting AJC services, featuring local personalities including Passion Santos, Augie T, and Lanai.
- Radio Ads: Localized versions for each county.
- Social Media & Digital Ads: Google Search and YouTube ads, Facebook/Instagram posts, and influencer partnerships.
- Out-of-Home Ads: Bus wraps and community flyers.
- Culturally-Relevant Outreach: Materials were translated into multiple languages (e.g., Tagalog, Ilocano, Korean), and radio spots were adapted for multilingual platforms (e.g., KNDI).
- Community Engagement: Partnerships with churches, nonprofits, and cultural centers; social media content; and outreach at job fairs and schools.

The presentation included TV and radio spots.

Discussion and Q&A Highlights:

- Chair DeMello inquired about metrics for campaign success. Caroline Witherspoon shared that while a post-campaign survey was not currently budgeted, engagement metrics (clicks, impressions, QR code scans) and site traffic will be used to assess impact.
- Bennette Misalucha suggested adding a survey question at AJC intake to ask how clients heard about the center. Kevin Aki Jr. confirmed this could be easily implemented.
- Keith DeMello and Jocelyn Collado discussed tagging partner organizations and AJCs on social media to expand reach.

- Chavonnie Ramos raised the need for the Stevens Amendment disclaimer on print and digital outreach materials and offered to provide the boilerplate language. Becker Communications confirmed they would incorporate it.
- Council members, including Dion Dizon, David Rodriguez, and Jade Rojas-Letisi, provided positive feedback on the campaign's tone, cultural fit, and media diversity. Counties confirmed willingness to share campaign content through their own communications channels.

Chair DeMello thanked Becker Communications for their work and noted the committee's appreciation for the campaign's thoughtful design and local resonance. The Becker team was invited to stay for the remainder of the meeting or depart as needed.

III. Committee Discussion: 2026 Legislative Topics

[Timestamp: 00:41:33 – 00:59:20]

Chair Keith DeMello opened the discussion on potential legislative priorities for the 2026 session. He began by summarizing the committee's recent legislative activities, noting that he and Tui Scanlan had been authorized to submit testimony on behalf of the Council when aligned with its general sentiment. In the 2024 session, they submitted testimony on seven measures, including governor's messages and Senate Bill 742, which established a government working group for workforce data integration.

Chair DeMello identified four strategic areas for improvement in preparation for the next session:

- Move legislative planning timeline up
- Develop proactive bill language and testimony strategies
- Engage in coalition-building with business and labor partners
- Create a consistent timeline with milestones for internal review and stakeholder vetting

He invited committee members to propose issues for consideration and mentioned key workforce-related topics that emerged in the past session:

- Training and internship program funding
- Barriers to employment such as childcare and cost of living
- Workforce development proposals tied to economic diversification and defense sector employment

- A resolution to establish a Workforce Excellence Award program (introduced by Sen. Stanley Chang)

Discussion Highlights:

- **Special Session Possibility:** Bennette Misalucha noted that a potential special session could address pending governor's appointments to the WDC.
- **Sunshine Law Cautions:** Bennette clarified acceptable interactions under the Sunshine Law and emphasized caution when continuing legislative coordination outside of meetings.
- **Timeline Recommendations:** Dion Dizon proposed aligning the legislative report with a survey in fall to gather stakeholder input before session. Bennette agreed to consult with OIP on how to implement this legally.
- **Housekeeping Measures:** Bennette mentioned needed revisions to bylaws to ensure consistency with HRS, which the committee could pursue with legislative sponsorship.
- **Collaboration Opportunities:** David Rodriguez explained DLIR's internal timeline to gather division legislative ideas after the July 9 veto deadline, with outreach planned around July 20.
- **Data Integration Working Group:** Chair DeMello suggested inviting the group to present their year-end report to either the Special Projects Committee or the full WDC.

Chair DeMello closed by encouraging members to submit additional legislative suggestions beyond the meeting and stated that the next committee meeting would revisit housekeeping items and develop a preliminary list of potential bills or priorities to recommend to the full Council.

IV. Executive Director's Report

[Timestamp: 00:59:20 – 01:05:47]

Executive Director Bennette Misalucha delivered an update on the implementation of the 2024–2028 Workforce Development State Unified Plan. She acknowledged that some information may have been shared during the recent WDC Quarterly Board Meeting but reiterated key highlights to ensure all participants were informed.

A. Unified Plan Implementation

- The upcoming Workforce Synergy Summit is scheduled for July 9 at Honolulu Community College (8:00 AM – 12:00 PM).
- Hawai'i has received grant support from the National Governors Association to develop a long-term vision, referred to as Hawai'i's Generational Commitment (North Star Statement), to be launched at the summit.
- Following the summit, the Council will host a Future of Work Conference in September, and a progress report will be submitted to DLIR leadership, the Governor, and the Legislature. The formal modification of the plan is due to the U.S. Department of Labor in March or April 2026.

B. Roles and Responsibilities of WDC and WDD

- A workgroup has been meeting regularly throughout 2024 to clarify the division of roles between the Workforce Development Council and the Workforce Development Division.
- The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) outlining these roles is now expected to be completed in Q3 of 2025.

C. Operational Highlights and Forthcoming Projects

- Website updates are underway, including the addition of WDC member photos and bios, expected to launch in the coming week.
- Beginning in Q3, the Council will focus on organizational planning, working with committee chairs to ensure alignment and relevance.
- Planning is also underway for budget and board retreat activities scheduled for September–October.
- The Council is assuming local board responsibilities for Kaua'i, which currently lacks a local board. Technical assistance has been requested from the U.S. Department of Labor to support this transition.

D. WIOA Unexpended Funds & Upcoming Events

- A successful fiscal training was held the previous Thursday and Friday with participation from over 40 representatives across workforce boards.
- An upcoming webinar with the Strada Foundation is scheduled for July.
- The Future of Work Conference will be held on September 24, 2025.

- The WDC will soon launch a call for nominations for Workforce Development Heroes, with honorees to be recognized at the Future of Work Conference. Forms and deadlines will be announced in the coming weeks.

Bennette concluded her report and opened the floor for questions. Chair Keith DeMello thanked her for the comprehensive update.

V. Announcements and Constituent Comments

[Timestamp: 01:05:47 – 01:06:44]

Chair Keith DeMello opened the floor for public announcements or comments.

VI. Next Meeting

[Timestamp: 01:06:44 – 01:07:02]

Chair DeMello announced that the next Special Projects Committee meeting is scheduled for September 29, 2025, at 1:30 PM, to be held via Zoom and in person at the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR), 830 Punchbowl Street, Room 310, Honolulu, Hawai'i.

VII. Adjournment

[Timestamp: 01:07:02]

With no further business, Chair Keith DeMello adjourned the meeting at 4:08 PM.