

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



JADE T. BUTAY  
DIRECTOR

WILLIAM G. KUNSTMAN  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

BENNETTE MISALUCHA  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII  
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS  
KA 'OIHANA PONO LIMAHANA  
830 PUNCHBOWL STREET,  
ROOM 317  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813  
<https://labor.hawaii.gov/wdc/>  
phone: (808) 586-8815 / Fax: (808) 586-8822  
Email: [dlir.workforce.council@hawaii.gov](mailto:dlir.workforce.council@hawaii.gov)

**HAWAII WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL  
EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING**

**AGENDA**

**Date:** January 15, 2026

**Time:** 1:30 p.m.

**In-Person Meeting Location:** Princess Ruth Ke'elikolani Building  
830 Punchbowl Street, Room 317  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

**Virtual Participation:** Virtual Videoconference Meeting – Zoom Meeting (Link below)

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87462175308?pwd=ajst2f04gP9X3MpzYanwaQA44qAtb5.1>

Meeting ID: 874 6217 5308

Passcode: 653507

Dial-in: 1 (719) 359-4580

**Agenda:** The agenda was posted to the State electronic calendars as required by §92-7(b), Hawaii Revised Statutes ("HRS")

**Board Meeting Materials:** Meeting materials are available for review at  
<https://labor.hawaii.gov/wdc/meeting-docs/>

Individuals may submit written testimony by hard copy mail or hand delivery to: Attn: Workforce Development Council, 830 Punchbowl Street, Suite 317, Honolulu, HI 96813 or by email at [DLIR.Workforce.Council@hawaii.gov](mailto:DLIR.Workforce.Council@hawaii.gov). We request submission of testimony at least 24 hours prior to the meeting to ensure that it can be distributed to the Board members. Any written testimony submitted after such time will be retained as part of the record and distributed to members as soon as practicable, but we cannot ensure members will receive it in sufficient time to review prior to any decision-making.

**Internet Access:**

To view the meeting and provide live oral testimony, please use the link at the top of the agenda. You will be asked to enter your name. The Board requests that you enter your full name, but you may use a pseudonym or

other identifier if you wish to remain anonymous. You will also be asked for an email address. You may fill in this field with any entry in an email format, e.g., [\\*\\*\\*\\*\\*@\\*\\*\\*mail.com](mailto:*****@***mail.com). Your microphone will be automatically muted, and video will be turned off. When the Chairperson asks for public testimony, you may click the Raise Hand button found on your Zoom screen to indicate that you wish to testify about an agenda item. You will individually be enabled to unmute your microphone, turn on your video if you choose to, and testify. When recognized by the Chairperson, please unmute your microphone and turn on your video if you choose to before speaking and mute your microphone and turn off your video after you finish speaking

**Phone Access:**

If you do not have internet access, you may get audio-only access by calling the Zoom Phone Number listed at the top on the agenda. Upon dialing the number, you will be prompted to enter the Meeting ID which is also listed at the top of the agenda. After entering the Meeting ID, you will be asked to wait to be admitted into the meeting. When the Chairperson asks for public testimony, you may indicate you want to testify by entering “\*” and then “9” on your phone’s keypad. After entering “\*” and then “9”, a voice prompt will let you know that the host of the meeting has been notified. When recognized by the Chairperson, you may unmute yourself by pressing “\*” and then “6” on your phone. A voice prompt will let you know that you are unmuted. Once you are finished speaking, please enter “\*” and then “6” again to mute yourself.

For both internet and phone access, when testifying, you will be asked to identify yourself and the organization, if any, that you represent. Each testifier will be limited to five minutes of testimony per agenda item. Pursuant to section 92-3.7(e), HRS, the Board may remove or block any person who willfully disrupts or compromises the conduct of the meeting.

If connection to the meeting is lost for more than 30 minutes, the meeting will be continued on a specified date and time. This information will be provided on the Council’s website at <https://labor.hawaii.gov/wdc/meeting-docs/>.

Instructions to attend State of Hawaii virtual board meetings may be found online at <https://labor.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/State-of-Hawaii-Virtual-Board-Attendee-Instructions.pdf>.

Vision Statement

The Workforce Development Council’s vision is that all employers have competitively skilled employees and all residents seeking work or advancement have sustainable employment and self-sufficiency.

Mission Statement

It is the intent of the Workforce Development Council to support and guide the implementation of the Unified State Plan through active collaboration and regional sensitivity for the purpose of aligning, coordinating, and integrating workforce services to meet the needs of employers and residents in order to foster a robust economy.

- I. Call to Order..... Gina Anonuevo, Chair of the Employer Engagement Committee
- II. Approval of April 16, 2025, Meeting Minutes
- III. Presentation from the Tennessee Workforce Development Board  
**Deniece Thomas**, Commissioner, Labor and Workforce Development  
Commissioner Denise Thomas will highlight how the State of Tennessee has positioned itself as a national leader in employer engagement by aligning state resources to the full business life cycle. She will discuss the state’s comprehensive Employer Guide, which details support available from startup and growth through expansion, maturity, contraction, and even closure.

The presentation will showcase how employers can access training, recruitment services, talent-pipeline strategies, networking opportunities, and guidance through complex regulatory requirements — all designed to strengthen businesses and the workforce that supports them.

IV. Presentation from American Job Center Hawaii, WorkHawaii's Business Services Team  
**Earl Kalani**, Workforce Engagement & Recruitment Specialist

This presentation will spotlight O'ahu's unique approach to employer engagement, led by the Business Unit within WorkHawaii — the only local workforce board in the state with a dedicated outreach team. The presentation will walk through how the unit builds relationships with local employers, creates on-the-job training opportunities, and leverages WIOA funds to meet business and workforce needs. Participants will gain practical insight into the “nuts and bolts” of sustained employer outreach, with an eye toward replicating and expanding these strategies across other local workforce development boards.

V. Executive Director's Report

The Executive Director will cover the following topics:

1. Modification of the State Unified Plan (In order to continue to receive federal funds, the State of Hawaii needs to submit its strategic plan every four years, with a modification plan due every two years. The Modification Plan is due March or April of this year. The Executive Director will provide a status report of the coordination efforts with the core partners under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).
2. Implementation of the Generational Commitment (Hawai'i North Star): There will be a webinar series in January and February which will feature several states who are going through a transformational journey to achieve their workforce development objectives. The details of the series will be provided.
3. Internship Summit on March 4, 2026: The Workforce Development Council in collaboration with other workforce partners will hold the first ever Hawai'i Internship Summit on March 4, 2026, from 8:30 am to 3:00 pm at the Japanese Cultural Center. Details on the agenda and other pertinent details will be shared.
4. Internship Excellence Awards: The award recognizes the outstanding programs and participants from both the Hele Imua internship program as well as the non-governmental sectors (private businesses and non-profits). Details of the award categories as well as the nomination process will be shared.

VI. Strategic Discussions on Committee Priorities for 2026

With new committee leadership, it is important to clearly redefine the committee's parameters and areas of responsibility, so all members share a common understanding. This agenda item will invite committee members to provide input on priorities, direction, and key activities moving forward.

VII. Next Meeting

Scheduled for Tuesday, April 16, 2026, 1:30 p.m.

Virtual Videoconferencing Meeting via Zoom and in-person at 830 Punchbowl Street, Room 317, Honolulu, HI 96813

#### VIII. Adjournment

Reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities are available upon request. Requests for accommodations should be submitted via email to [Bennette.E.Misalucha@hawaii.gov](mailto:Bennette.E.Misalucha@hawaii.gov) or by calling Bennette Misalucha at (808) 586- 3018 (voice) as soon as possible. Such requests should include a detailed description of the accommodation needed. In addition, please include a way for Bennette Misalucha to contact the requester if more information is needed to fulfill the request. Last minute requests will be accepted but may not be possible to accommodate. Upon request, this notice is available in alternate formats.



Deniece Thomas  
**Commissioner**  
*Labor and Workforce Development*

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## About the Commissioner

Governor Bill Lee appointed Deniece Thomas as Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development in September 2022.

Before her appointment, Commissioner Thomas had served as the agency's Deputy Commissioner since 2019. She started her career with the state of Tennessee in 2007 working in the Clarksville American Job Center. Over the years, Commissioner Thomas has risen through the ranks of the Department as a Director, Assistant Administrator, Assistant Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner.

Commissioner Thomas is a member of the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) where she serves as co-chair for Workforce ITSC, previous chair of the Employment and Training Committee, past member of both the Veterans Committee since 2015 and the National Apprenticeship Workgroup.

Additionally, she also serves as the State Workforce Liaison for the National Governor's Association where she serves on the Executive Committee. She also serves as a member of the Tennessee Advisory Council on Intergovernmental Relations.

Commissioner Thomas is a 2014 Graduate of LEAD Tennessee Alliance 5 and Leadership Tennessee Class VIII. She holds a Master of Arts degree in Civic Leadership from Lipscomb University in Nashville and a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Alabama Birmingham.