

**Hawaii Workforce Development Council
Meeting Minutes**

Wednesday, February 18, 2026

9:30 a.m. to 12 noon

- I. Call to Order (00:40)..... Keith DeMello, Chair, Workforce Development Council

Chair DeMello called the meeting to order at 9:31 a.m. and acknowledged the presence of Vice Chair Trang Malone, and Deputy Attorneys General Lianne Yamashiro and Kelly Ha. The roll call of councilmembers was taken, and quorum was achieved at 18 members present.

- II. Approval of Minutes of November 18, 2025 (11:09)
The spelling of “Lea Dias” will be corrected in the Minutes of November 18, 2025. Dion Dizon motioned to approve the minutes as corrected; Carla Kurokawa seconded the motion; the motion was carried unanimously.

- III. Welcome New Board Members (13:08)
Chair DeMello welcomed new board members who will be going through the senate confirmation process this session and will be given the oath of office at the Q3 WDC meeting. The new members are:
 - A. Jason Benn, Senior Vice President, Chief Transformation & Administrative Officer, Hawaiian Electric
 - B. Douglas Chang, General Manager, Ritz Carlton, Oahu Turtle Bay
 - C. George Denise, Director, Project Management Hawaii; Workforce Development Chair, General Contractors Association

Chair DeMello also recognized Robert Lietzke from Booz, Allen, Hamilton, who has retired and as such will be stepping down as a board member, and thanked him for his 3 years of service to the Council.

(Board Member Wanelle Kaneshiro arrived at 9:40 a.m., 19 voting members present)

- IV. Presentation: Federal Funding Matters.....Tim Carlton, National Governor’s Association, Director of Legislative Affairs

Tim Carlton’s presentation was deferred until the next meeting.

- V. Presentation on Hele Imua Internship Program (15:04).....Maricar Pilotin-Freitas, Administrator, Workforce Development Division; Denise Yamaguchi, Executive Director, Hawaii Agricultural Foundation (HAF) and, Liz Stanton, HAF

The internship program which was limited to the public sector has been expanded to the private sector. Maricar Pilotin-Freitas and Denise Yamaguchi are here to explain more about the program.

Maricar explained that Act 251 was signed into law which expanded the Hele Imua Program to the private sector. A pilot program was initiated with the Hawaii Agricultural Foundation (HAF) to address the workforce demand of the agriculture sector. They were able to place three interns.

Denise Yamaguchi yielded her time to Liz Stanton of the Hawaii Agricultural Foundation who worked more directly with the internship program.

Liz Stanton explained that the program was a 12-week internship opportunity, \$1.8 million was secured to expand the program into the private sector. The first thing that was needed was to get the word out. The Department of Labor and Industrial Relations sent out a press release, so did the Hawaii Agricultural Foundation. The announcement was sent to 19,000+ members of the HAF listserve, applications were available on the HAF website, seeking prospective small farms and interns. Eligibility for small farms were: 5 or fewer full-time employees, Hawaii Compliance Express clearance, and have sufficient insurance to meet State of Hawaii requirements. Eligibility for interns: 18 years of age or older, current or recent graduate of high school or college, and demonstrate an interest in agriculture. Applications were received from 42 farms, and 36 potential interns.

Of the 42 farm applicants, 25 were qualified. All four counties were represented. Of the 34 applicants, 34 met the requirements. All counties except Kauai were represented. The three farms chosen and matched with interns were: Deep Dirt Farms from North Hilo, Kumano I Ke Ala at Kukuiloloa from Haleiwa, and Flower Farm Hawaii from Wahiawa.

The interns gained a variety of experiences depending on the farm. For instance, irrigation system basics, tree care and orchard maintenance, cacao propagation and processing, cultivation of kalo, site restoration, pest identification and management, and business overview.

Early successes (there are still one month remaining), mentorship from working farmers, practical, skill-based training, paid, accessible internships, strengthening Hawaii's agricultural talent pipeline, administrative support for small farm partners. Administrative paperwork took longer than expected. We hoped to have a larger statewide recruitment, but we did not have intern applicants on Kauai even though there were farm applicants. So, we need to examine how we can better market the program across the state.

Chair DeMello asked, "how will this information be shared for the future?" Denise Yamaguchi answered, "the best steps moving forward will be to work with DLIR because it is a state program. The State could provide information on how to fill out the paperwork and make the process more efficient."

Board member Dion Dizon thanked Maricar and the Workforce Development Division (WDD) staff; there is an intern in the center where she works and the staff at WDD was very easy to work with and the process was very smooth.

VI. Presentation: 2024-2028 State Unified Plan Modification (24:39)

Executive Director Bennette Misalucha and representatives of the core partners Titles I, II, III, and IV provided information on the State Unified Plan which is being modified. The Modified Unified Plan is the primary workforce strategy under WIOA. It is a roadmap to align programs, priorities, and investments across the workforce system in the state. The U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) requires the Plan for us to continue to receive federal funds. It is a healthy exercise for us to go through because it sets directions, making sure that our workforce efforts are coordinated rather than working in silos. It guides our policy priorities, our funding priorities, our system designs, and sets expectations for performance.

The role of WDC, as the State Board is to develop, modify, and implement the Unified State Plan. Two years into each four-year State Plan we are required to modify the plan because circumstances change, economies change, and there may be extenuating circumstances that may need for us to pivot them to a new direction. It's a normal process. A timeline of the submission process was presented. The process started in November. Each of the titles and agencies worked together, and at the same time, also within their own work group, to produce their portion of the plan. Today we are asking the Council to approve the Plan for release for public comment. The public comment period will be from February 19 to March 23, 2026. The public comment period is required for submittal. The board will have a final opportunity to "bless" the plan at a special meeting on April 2nd or 3rd. The Plan will then be submitted to the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education and other attendant agencies.

The WIOA partners shape the strategy, and this collaboration is essential to make sure that we are addressing workforce challenges effectively. The Plan being presented today is a shared product of our work together for the same goals.

When our workforce strategy started in 2024 four pillars were identified. Pillar I: alignment with economic growth, work; Pillar II: strengthening alliances with education and training, learn; Pillar III: removing barriers to employment, thrive; Pillar IV: creating system synergy/integration, belong. Over the course of two years, through many convenings, the effort culminated in the development of Hawaii's North Star. It was crystallized into our generational commitment. Matt Stevens and Keala Peters are here today to share about the movement that has evolved into something amazing and collaborative. The values of the generational commitment can be summed up into four values: learn, work, thrive, and belong. What it underscores is that the community is now at the center, and this is not a short-term solution, there's a long-term perspective. Each of our core partners will now share their parts of the plan.

Maricar Pilotin-Freitas, Workforce Development Division, highlighting the changes and what's important in the Plan. Our part of the plan is Title I, the Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth

programs, mainly serving low-income individuals. Dislocated workers have been laid off from their jobs because of closings or downsizing. Services are provided through the American Job Centers (AJC), using a no-wrong door approach so that potential participants can be served by functional teams and co-enrolled so there's a braiding of funds from different programs. We are asking for a waiver for Kauai so the State Board will act as the local workforce board for Kauai. Memoranda of Understanding were signed, WDD is providing Title I services and USDOL has approved the partnership. We are asking for a waiver for the Youth Program so that the In-School Youth expenditures are not limited to 50%. This waiver will not affect services to the Out-of-School Youth. Older youth 18 years of age to 24 may be served by the Adult Program. We are also asking for a waiver for the On-the-Job Training program. The reimbursement of wages to the employer is currently limited to 50%. We are asking to be allowed to increase the reimbursement to 90%. Hopefully this increase will encourage employers to take advantage of hiring the adult and dislocated population.

This is not a change, but I wanted to emphasize that for our federal grants, veterans and their spouses receive priority of service. There is also the Jobs for Veterans State Grant which provides help to those transitioning from the military to civilian life. The AJC has dedicated veteran staff to provide individualized counseling.

Wagner-Peyser is Title III, known as the labor exchange system, that is funded by the USDOL and was established in 1933. This program provides equal access to employers and jobseekers to have access to services to help with finding jobs in the workplace.

I wanted to highlight Act 214, which was signed into law in July, that the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment focus on Unemployment Insurance claimants. Now, under Act 214 when they file for unemployment benefits, they are automatically registered in the program. The program helps into the workforce.

Under Title III, we will be asking for two waivers. One is to allow flexibility for merit staffing, which would allow for quicker hiring so that needed services can be provided and to avoid gaps in services. We are also asking for flexibility with the Migrant Seasonal Farmworker (MSFW) program. The regulation requires that we have dedicated staff to provide outreach to that program. Right now, there are zero MSFW under the program definition in Hawaii. It would not be beneficial to have dedicated staff when there are no participants to serve. So, we are requesting a waiver for the program.

Registered apprenticeships are a proven model that provides sustainable wages. During Program Year 2024 the department served almost 1,500 apprentices statewide; 480 program completions; and over 5,000 active apprentices across industries. We are expanding the program to non-traditional apprenticeships, such as education (Teacher Apprenticeship) and healthcare (Pharmacy Technician). We need more partnerships to ensure that program becomes a success. We have also purchased virtual reality goggles that are available at the AJCs to allow jobseekers to explore different types of jobs before committing to training.

(Jade Rojas-Letisi, designee for Maui Mayor Richard Bissen, arrived at 10:12 a.m., 20 voting members present)

Ryan Mandado, Education Specialist, Adult Education, Hawaii Department of Education, represents Title II, the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AFLA) programs in Hawaii. He explained that Title II funding is managed by the Office of Curriculum and Instructional Design, Workforce Development Branch. Dr. Wanelle Kaneshiro-Erdman is our State Director, and he is the Program Manager. The program operates 10 strategic sites statewide, serving a diverse population of over 3,700 students or adult learners. Our reach is broad, but our focus is centered on transforming lives through foundational and functional literacy. Our core activities focus on adult basic and secondary education for people wanting to obtain their high school equivalency. We have English language acquisition courses serving most learners from the Asia-Pacific region.

We also have education opportunities in corrections, ensuring that those in our criminal justice system are prepared for reentry. In the upcoming years, there will be a strong emphasis on integrated education and training programs where academic learning is paired directly with skilled vocational development. Moving forward our strategy is built on alignment. We are elevating our commitment to ensure every learner is workforce ready. We hope to expand the number of people taking GED and High School Equivalency (HiSET) exams, expand Integrated Education and Training (IET), and move towards a model where learning and earning happen in tandem. We are actively seeking to bridge the gap between our classroom and industry by partnering with local employees, unions, and community organizations. GEDs and HiSET are springboards to earn a living wage; and our adult learners are employable and essential to our state's economy.

Lea Dias, Administrator, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), Department of Human Services, explained that Title IV is a full WIOA Core Partner, accountable for measurable outcomes and dedicated to our generational commitment. The mission of DVR is competitive integrated employment, real careers and real wages. DVR serves youth and adults with an expectation of independence and full participation in our workforce. Our work is not short-term. Accountability means outcomes for employment and good wages.

Our progress and accountability so far. Over the last 2 years, we have focused on strengthening the foundation of our program. Our employment outcomes are more than triple over the year before, and we filled some of the long-term vacancies in our department. Staffing stabilization has helped with improving our performance. We've also been focusing on engagement, earlier, rapid, and ongoing engagement with our participants as well as our partners. We are also continuing to enhance the accuracy of our data because performance transparency builds trust, both federally and statewide.

We've been able to close out a couple of corrective action plans that we have been under with our federal funder, the U.S. Department of Education. This modification plan reflects a program that is stable and accountable. We hope to continue to collaborate with other core

partners, agencies, and businesses to have our students engage in summer youth employment, Hele Imua, apprenticeships, and other initiatives; and ensuring our training services will lead to credentials. We also included Workforce Pell in the modification. We are looking forward to seeing what will become available to benefit our participants and benefit our economy as well.

We are examining career pathways within our own agency. One part of the State Plan is called the Comprehensive System for Personnel Development (CSPD). That part asks to describe how we will enhance recruitment, retention, and ensure excellence of our staff. So, in this modification, I am proposing a revision to our minimum qualifications for our positions, which I believe will make them more attractive and keep standards high. We want to have the ability to attract good people into our field, retain them in our field and have a clear pathway for them to move up within DVR.

We want to hear from employers, to have more employer-driven engagement. What do employers need? How can we expand work-based learning and sector partnerships to enable individuals with disabilities are able to compete for job openings in growth industries?

I believe that when we talk about workforce strategy, a large part of the role of Title IV is making sure that individuals with disabilities always have a seat at the table. I want to reiterate that disability is not a separate workforce issue. It is embedded in every sector and every labor market strategy.

Chari DeMello asked for a motion for the board to act on the first draft of the Plan. Council Vice Chair Trang Malone motioned to ratify the first draft of the plan and to release this version for public comment, to be posted on the WDC website starting on February 19, 2026, and finishing the public comment period on March 23, 2026. The motion was seconded by Member Cheryl Cross. Chair DeMello suggested that we proactively proceed with seeking public comment for the purpose of gathering authentic feedback on the State Plan. After asking if there were further discussions, he asked for a roll call vote. The motion was passed with 20 aye votes, zero noes, and no abstentions.

VII. Presentation: Learn, Work, Thrive Hui.....Matt Stevens, Hawaii Workforce Funders Collaborative and Keala Peters, Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii

Chair DeMello explained that the implementation of the plan has evolved into one that is community driven. Members of the workforce community have coalesced toward a common goal. Matt Stevens of the Hawaii Workforce Funders Collaborative and Keala Peters of the Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii are here to share some of those efforts and next steps.

Keala Peters explained that they will provide an update on the Learn, Work, Thrive Hui. A group of stakeholders from throughout the state met 5 times over 10 months. Keala and Matt led the Workforce Synergy Pillar for the Unified State Plan. Along with guidance from the National Governors Association, it became clear that establishing a statewide North Star goal is a best

practice for states who are doing similar work to Hawaii. That North Star goal quickly became Hawaii's Generational Workforce Commitment. The stakeholders recognized that while the North Star is a goal, the generational commitment is a promise, so the transition was made from the North Star to Hawaii's Generation Commitment: By 2045, all people of Hawaii will have a path to a career that enables them to learn, work, and thrive in Hawaii and contribute to a vibrant local economy grounded in community values. The Learn, Work, Thrive Hui is a statewide group of workforce stakeholders, and this Hui is growing as we move towards statewide adoption. The Hui is focused on alignment, implementation, and shared learning across workforce stakeholders.

Two flows of work: 1) getting the goal adopted (HB 1859), advancing the Commitment through policy, executive action, and public alignment. 2) Beginning to deliver toward the goal (everyday) by advancing job quality, youth pathways, and work-based learning across sectors; strengthening island specific strategies; aligning and not duplicating the work already happening across agencies, employers, schools, and communities.

The generational commitment is an umbrella that stakeholders that efforts of individual workforce agencies sit under, where various organizations can see their work represented. The structure of the Hui is comprised of four lands of work: 1) Government and non-profit 2) Employers and Industry 3) Education and training 4) Funders

This is an evolving group we hope to add labor to group.

Matt Stevens explained that the Hui is a place where we can coordinate the conversations about the work that we all have been doing. It will also be able to publicly tell the story of the great work and progress we make on aligning workforce systems. The Hawaii Workforce Funders Collaborative put out a report about a month ago, "From Crisis to Coalition: A 2026 Roadmap for Hawaii's Generational Workforce Commitment (2026)", [From Crisis to Coalition: A 2026 Roadmap for Hawai'i's Generational Workforce Commitment — Hawai'i Workforce Funders Collaborative](#) This follows the first report, "From Crisis to Opportunity: Building Hawaii's Workforce Resilience, (2025)" [From Crisis to Opportunity: Building Hawai'i's Workforce Resilience — Hawai'i Workforce Funders Collaborative](#)

We're hoping with the codification of the generational workforce commitment that all the work can align around the commitment going forward. How can we continue to set shared milestones? What are the foundational things we want to see across education, economic development, across equity and alignment in the coming years? Is our work continuing to move the needle incrementally forward. After approximately 3years our work will be expanding what works and institutionalizing standard practice and normalizing what it looks like to plan on a generational 20-year cycle.

There were 20 organizations providing testimony for the first hearing for HB1859. Hearing 20 different stakeholder voices shows that the coordination is already happening. The governor and 30 organizations endorsed the Generational Commitment which was announced with a

press release. There will be other bills that ask the state to make further investment in some of the foundational items: internships, apprenticeships, upskilling, lifelong learning that will help make progress in building the foundation. We will be presenting the Generational Commitment with different audiences, continuing to gain support from a wider audience. Feel free to refer other organizations to join the Hui.

Keala Peters underscored that the State Unified Plan is going to be the vehicle to guide the Hui and vice versa. Every four years, as the Plan is update, it will reflect the input of the Hui and this broad statewide coalition.

The presence of Cheryl Cross and Chris Lum Lee was acknowledged by Bennette Misalucha, 22 voting members present.

VIII. Presentation: Holomua Collective (1:22:09)Joshua Wisch, Holomua Collective

Joshua Wisch explained that the Holomua Collective is a non-profit organized around four years ago with the mission of making sure that all local working families in Hawaii could afford to stay. They are focused on cost of living, housing, groceries, also economic revitalization and workforce development. The organization was built on a belief that we don't just have to react to crisis, but we can build a hopeful future where working families have a chance to thrive. To have hope there first needs to be trust. Here, progress moves at the speed of trust. Holomua Collective invests a lot of time in bring people from different backgrounds together. They have convened almost 250 cross sector leaders from for-profit and non-profit organizations and county and state government, and labor unions in 60 in-person sessions so far; working to build trusting relationships.

Where there has been an impact is at the legislature, where there has been a 40% success rate of Holomua's priority bills. Much of the work has been done in person because that is one of the strongest ways to build trust. Their work is also grounded in data, for instance Aloha United Way's report on the challenges of the ALICE families. Less visible has been the "missing middle." Which has been pulled out by the annual employee affordability survey. The survey participants are either lifetime residents or have lived here more than 20 years, almost all are registered voters, 61% earn more than \$100,000 per year. They are working hard but still have some challenges. The overall sense is that people have lost faith in local institutions. Only non-profit organizations have a net positive rating over 50%.

In 2025, 42% of respondents said that it is "very difficult" to save money from their paychecks. Compared to 34% in 2024. These respondents are making \$100,000 a year or more, on paper they should be feeling okay, but they are not feeling like it. One of the slides that get the most attention is the "to leave or stay?" The survey shows about 75% of residents when asked are thinking that they are not sure, but they say that they are thinking about moving within 5 years. The people who have enough money to leave are seriously looking to leave for a lower cost of living location. It would be a huge hit to our tax base if those residents leave.

The survey also asked people for their own ideas of what can be done. Some of their responses were: dedicated local housing market, supporting high wage, streamlining permitting, upskilling, reskilling, skill-based employees, entrepreneurship reports, stronger school-to-job pipelines, all the things that WDC is focused on are the same things that the 3,200 locally employed residents are telling us they think we need to focus on. It shows alignment between what people need; what people think needs to happen, and what you're doing.

There is alignment between businesses and residents in the belief that Hawaii is a difficult place to do business. Other areas of consensus between respondents: 91% think more should be done to recruit and retain critical workforce members; 90% said build housing for residents, and 80% said that we need to increase access to childcare and education for children aged 0-5.

The hope for home ownership is incredibly low, 67% of people are somewhere between very and somewhat unhopeful that they're ever going to be able to own a home. Josh recommended the book, "Homelessness is a Housing Problem," which shows that the major differences between cities with large unsheltered populations and those without is that more housing was built.

This next slide speaks to why this generational commitment is important is that even with the array of workforce programs across the state, 45% of the respondents are not at all aware of workforce development programs. Which underscores the need to do continued public education about what is available. We are continuing to push HB 1859 the Generational Commitment Bill which has passed the House Labor Committee.

Based on the information gathered, we spend most of our time on two main initiatives: building a dedicated housing market for local families and creating economic opportunity and improving the workforce development pipeline.

IX. Presentation on Workforce Pell.....Bennette Misalucha, Keala Monaco

Pell grants have always been tied to long-term degrees, associate or bachelor's degrees. Workforce Pell expands federal grant eligibility to high-quality, short-term training programs. Primarily, it's to bridge the gap between the traditional academic degree and the urgent training needs of Hawaii's labor market. Three pillars define the program: the skills gap, economic mobility, cost efficiency.

Skill Gap: The program was created to meet the increasing demand for skilled workers in various sectors.

Economic mobility: by providing financial assistance, the program helps reduce barriers to education for the underserved populations.

Cost Efficiency: Lower the financial barrier for essential credentials that do not require a full degree.

Targeted at shorter programs of 150 to 600 clock hours, so trainees earn credentials in months rather than years in high demand and high wage careers where there is a shortage of workers.

The Workforce Pell focuses on intensifying the training, not shortening it, so that the credentials will hold the same weight as the traditional credentials. In essence it funds a direct pipeline into Hawaii's workforce through the program.

The first step in the process is determination of criteria. WDC will be using recommendations from a working group and will formally determine the criteria, hopefully at the May 20th board meeting. Then the University takes the lead, and they will review their existing programs using their benchmarks, once they identify the fit, they will submit those programs to the working group for initial vetting. In the third phase, the working group will make a recommendation to WDC for certification of the programs. Once the certification is made, the package moves to the governor's office because under the law, the governor, upon the advice of the State Workforce Board, will certify those programs. The governor will then submit the certified list to the U.S. Secretary of Education. The department will validate the certification, and the programs can be activated. We want to be sure to meet the July 1st deadline.

Keala Monaco from the University of Hawaii Community College explained that the UH will be submitting a spreadsheet to the working group a list of courses that they believe are eligible. They held workshops on Workforce Pell and have asked the campuses to list the courses they believe are eligible. They do not believe that a lot of their courses meet the criteria of 599 hours and 16 weeks and a minimum of 8 weeks and 150 hours.

Bennette Misalucha, Keala Monaco, and Judy Olivera are working closely with the National Governors Association.

Carrie Price read a statement on behalf of Jade Butay, Director, Department of Labor and Industrial Relations. In response to the statement of concern that federal Pell grants carry complex compliance and audit requirements, Executive Director Misalucha explained that the program will not be administered by WDC, it will be administered by the University of Hawaii. Keala Monaco added that the university financial aid offices administer the Pell Grants to UH students. Council Member Lui Hokoana added that the UH administers hundreds of millions of dollars in Pell Grants and they conduct compliance audits regularly. UH will work out the details of the Workforce Pell grants and wants to be good partners to meet the training needs for the State of Hawaii.

Chair De Mello asked for a motion to ratify the WDC Resolution, "Establishing the State Planning and Implementation Framework for the Federal Workforce Pell Grant Program," noting that this is an interim step since the U.S. Department of Education has not yet released the final rules. Lui Hokoana motioned to ratify the resolution, Dion Dizon seconded the motion.

Chair De Mello asked the staff to conduct the roll call vote. The motion was approved with 20 aye votes, 0 no votes, and 0 abstentions.

- X. Governor’s Time (2:01:39).....Dan Kouchi, Policy Advisor and Designee for Governor Josh Green

Dan Kouchi referred to the reports provided in the board packet. During the Governor’s State of the State Address, he touched on priorities that have remained in place, such as: lowering the cost of living, building housing, reducing homelessness, strengthening healthcare and protecting Hawaii’s environment. He also talked about the need to expand the state’s film and tax credits to boost local hiring and to keep creative industries alive; the need to diversify and grow investments with career pathways such as healthcare, conservation, construction; strengthening public-private partnerships in healthcare, energy and education sectors. He was asked to continue to serve as national president for the Council of State Governments. He will be the incoming chair of the Western Governors Association. As chair he will have a chair initiative, which will be access to mental health care. Dan will work with the Council to collaborate on national opportunities that he may work on.

- XI. Labor Director’s Update (2:05:48)David Rodriguez, Designee for Department of Labor Director Jade Butay

Carrie Price provided an update on the department’s legislative priorities, including a measure to update the workers' compensation statute to conform to the new automated system and a measure to repeal the Hoisting Machine Operators Advisory Board. There is still uncertainty for certain federal funds and grants.

- XII. Fiscal Reports: Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Grants (2:08:20).....Ariel Nault, Administrative Services Office and Bennette Misalucha

Ariel presented the WIOA Grant Summary Report which is included in the board packet pages 98-104. The report provides an overview of grant balances, expenditure progress, and spending forecasts for the current and prior program years. For program year 2023, as of June 30, 2025, approximately \$6.9 million has been expended; leaving \$2.8 million in lapsed funds. Also as of June 30, 2025, \$1.9 million was encumbered on high school ready-to-work programs. In 2024 a similar amount was available as of June 30, 2025, \$6.9 million has been spent with \$2.8 million projected to lapse by June 30, 2026. \$1.9 million is contracted to the Department of Education for the Ready-To-Work program; the remaining \$822,000 is planned to be encumbered in the coming months. In addition, Rapid Response funds remain unspent.

- XIII. Certification of the Kauai American Job Center (2:11:44).....Bennette Misalucha

Usually, the certification of the American Job Centers is a responsibility of the local workforce boards. Since Kauai doesn’t have a local board, the certification rests with the Workforce Development Council (State Board). The certification process was conducted earlier last year;

it granted provisional certification with conditions. WDC is asked to ratify the recommendation of the Executive Committee recommendation to extend the certification from January 31, 2026, to May 30, 2026. The extension will allow more work on the corrective action plan.

Chair De Mello asked more a motion to extend the conditional certification of the Kauai American Job Center to May 30, 2026. Lui Hokoana made the motion, Lea Dias seconded the motion, a roll call vote was taken; the motion passed with 20 ayes, 0 noes, and 0 abstentions.

XIV. Legislative Plans for 2026 Legislative Session (2:17:00).....Keith De Mello

Chair De Mello reported that the WDC provided testimony on two measures: in support of HB 1859 which strengthens the Hawaii Workforce Governance framework by requiring WDC to recommend a comprehensive workforce strategy in the State Unified Plan; and HB 2383 previously mentioned on the Pell Grant. WDC provided comments on that bill.

The next item is a resolution for this Council to consider. Currently, two private sector council members represent WDC in testimony before the legislature. However, sometimes both members may not be available. This resolution would allow the Executive Director or a designee to step in and represent the position approved by the Chair or the executive committee.

Chair De Mello asked for a motion to approve the resolution authorizing a backup representation by WDC staff for legislative matters as stipulated in Resolution 2026-2. Dion Dizon made the motion; Trang Malone seconded the motion. After a roll call vote, the motion was carried with 20 ayes, 0 noes, and 0 abstentions.

XV. Executive Director’s Report (02:25:10).....Bennette Misalucha

Bennette Misalucha announced that the United State Secretary of Labor will be attending the Hawaii Internship Summit on March 4.

XVI. Acceptance of Written Reports from Core Partners

Chair De Mello noted that the written reports are in the Board Meeting Packet.

XVII. Acceptance of Written Reports from Local Workforce Development Boards

The written reports are included in the Board Meeting Packet.

XVIII. Acceptance of Written Reports from the Workforce Development Council Standing Committee

The written reports are included in the Board Meeting Packet.

Chair De Mello asked for comments or announcements. Leslie Wilkins, Chair of the Maui Workforce Development board announced that MEDB STEMWorks Innovation Internship Applications are open on STEMWorkshawaii.org and they are looking for employer hosts and intern applicants. They are planning to place 150 paid interns this summer statewide.

XIX. Workforce Development Council's Next Meeting

Tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, May 20, 2020 at 9:30 am-12 noon. Virtual videoconferencing via Zoom and in-person at 830 Punchbowl Street, Room 317, Honolulu, HI 96813

XX. Adjournment

Noting the end of the agenda and no further business to conduct, Chair De Mello adjourned the meeting at 12:01 p.m.