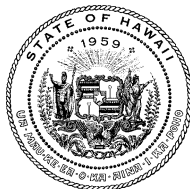


JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



JADE T. BUTAY  
DIRECTOR

WILLIAM G KUNSTMAN  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

BENNETTE MISALUCHA  
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HAWAII WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL  
SPECIAL BOARD MEETING

Minutes

**Date:** Thursday, April 2, 2026

**Time:** 9:30 am to 10:30 am

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

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

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

**Attendees:**

Members Present:

**Keith DeMello**, Workforce Development Council (WDC) Chair, Senior Vice President of Communication & External Affairs, Ulupono Initiative

**Rona Fukumoto**, President & CEO, Lanakila Pacific

**Derek Kanehira**, Senior Vice President, Human Resources, Alexander & Baldwin

**Sean Knox**, President, Hawaii Employment Services, Inc.

**Trang Malone**, WDC Vice Chair, Manager, Workforce Initiatives, CVS Health

**Sean Nakamura**, Corporate Controller and Treasurer, TradeWind Group

**Amber Akana**, Union Representative, Seafarers International Union of North America

**Dion Dizon**, Director, UH West Oahu Center for Labor Education and Research

**Carla Kurokawa**, Employment and Training Manager, Alu Like, Inc.

**Rossella Guardascione**, Chair, Hawai'i County Workforce Development Board

**Dan Kouchi**, Policy Advisor – Office of the Governor, State of Hawai'i

**Benson Medina** (*Designee-Mayor of Hawaii County*), Director, County of Hawai'i Department of Research and Development  
**Nalani Brun** (*Designee-Mayor of Kauai County*), Director, County of Kauai Office of Economic Development  
**Scott Collins**, Field Services Officer, MSC/Advocacy, Hawai'i Government Employees Association  
**David Rodriguez** (*Designee-Director of Department of Labor and Industrial Relations*), Equal Opportunity Officer, Department of Labor and Industrial Relations  
**Wanelle Kaneshiro** (*Designee-Superintendent of Hawai'i Department of Education*), Director, Workforce Development Branch, Hawai'i Department of Education  
**Keala Monaco** for **Lui Hokoana** (*Designee-President of Hawai'i System*)  
**Pane Meatoga III**, Deputy Political Director, Operating Engineers Local 3  
**Jason Benn**, governor's appointee  
**Doug Chang**, governor's appointee  
**George Denise**, governor's appointee  
**Christopher Burnett**, governor's appointee  
**Mark Phongsavath**, governor's appointee  
**Ashleigh Loa**, governor's appointee

Excused:

**Gina Woo Anonuevo**, Vice Chair and Chief Administrative Officer/Chief Human Resources Officer, First Hawaiian Bank  
**Manu Bermudes**, Vice President of Human Resources, Hawai'i Gas  
**Cheryl Cross**, Executive Search Consultant, Inkinen Executive Search  
**Shelli Ihori**, Director, Workforce Development, Hawaii Pacific Health  
**Cary Miyashiro**, President, Quad D Solutions  
**Tui Scanlan**, President, International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees Local 665  
**Christopher Lum Lee**, President and CEO of TriSec, Inc. and CEO of Hawai'i Coffee Works  
**Kehaulani Kukahiko** (*Kauai Mayor's Representative to WDC*), Manager of Education and Workforce Development for the Kauai Economic Development Board  
**Leslie Wilkins**, Chair, President, Maui Economic Development Board  
**Andrew Garrett**, Representative, State House of Representatives  
**Jade Rojas-Letisi** (*Designee-Mayor of Maui County*), Director, County of Maui Office of Economic Development  
**Lea Dias**, Administrator, Department of Human Services, Vocational Rehabilitation Division  
**Thomas Chock**, (*Designee-Director of Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism*) Program Specialist, Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism

Guests & Staff:

**Bennette Misalucha**, Executive Director, WDC  
**Jeanne Ohta**, Employment Specialist, WDC  
**Margaret Miura**, Program Specialist, WDC  
**Tyrone Apolinar**, Program Specialist, WDC  
**Jung Yun Ha**, Deputy Attorney General, Labor Division, State of Hawai'i

I. [Video 00:09:54] Call to Order – Keith DeMello, Chair, Workforce Development Council

The meeting was called to order by **Keith DeMello**, Workforce Development Council (WDC) Chair, at 9:40 am. Following roll call, Chair **DeMello** confirmed that 17 board members were present and 16 board members were needed for quorum. He recognized that Deputy Attorney General Kelly Ha was also present.

(**Thomas Chock** joined the meeting at 9:40 am, increased quorum to 18 board members.)

(**Jade Roja-Letisi** joined the meeting at 9:41 am, increased quorum to 19.)

(**Pane Meatoga III** signed on at 9:34 am, increased quorum to 20.)

II. [Video 00:11:51] Approval of the 2024-2028 Modified Workforce Development Unified State Plan – Bennette Misalucha, Executive Director

- [Video 00:12:35] Executive Director **Bennette Misalucha**, presented a high-level overview of the 2026-2027 Workforce Development Plan. The Workforce Development Council or the State Board is responsible for the development, modification, and implementation of the state strategic plan for workforce, education, and economic development systems covering all the core programs:

- Title I: Youth, Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs
- Title II: Adult Education and Family Literacy
- Title III: Employment Services
- Title IV: Vocational Rehabilitation Services

The Modified Plan which covers two years and divided into two sections, Strategic and Operational, will be submitted by April 6, 2026, for review by the US Department of Labor, US Department of Education, and the US Department of Human Services.

The workforce plan strategy evolved from the original 4 Pillars of program realignment to a strategy of system-wide changes with shared ownership across sectors. What emerged was a community-driven movement toward a “North Star” now called the Generational 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 economy grounded in community values.

To support the Generational Commitment, the following long-term goals were set:

1. Strengthening lifelong learning and skills adaptability
2. Improving job quality and workforce attachment
3. Advancing economic mobility and sector resilience
4. Expanding inclusive workforce participation
5. Enabling responsible technology adoption, and
6. Institutionalizing cross-system coordination

The short-term goals and priority focus areas for the next two years include the implementation of the Workforce Pell, employer engagement, state A.I. initiatives,

Kauai Service Delivery, and the integration of WIOA and Perkins V (Career and Technical Education) [into a combined state plan].

- **Chair DeMello** yielded the floor to testimony, questions or comments.
  - [Video 00:24:14] Department of Labor and Industrial Relations designee **David Rodriguez** inquired about the plan to integrate Perkins V plan into the WIOA Plan. Executive Director **Misalucha** provided context on the push from the national government to integrate the two plans for greater efficiency. She said that the efforts are underway to align and integrate the two plans and that the goal is to have a combined state plan executed by 2028 which is when the next iteration of the workforce Plan is due. Director **Misalucha** pointed to the most recent effort by WDC to work with P-20, the organization that administers the Perkins Plan, with guidance from the UH Board of Regents.
  - [Video 00:28:33] **Leelynn Brady**, Systems Advocacy Coordinator, Aloha Independent Living Hawai'i proposed 2 amendments to the Plan to ensure that individuals with disabilities are explicitly named as a priority population in Goal 4, and that remote and hybrid work is recognized as an access strategy for people with diverse disabilities statewide:
    - 1) **Add “This includes individuals with diverse disabilities.”** To be included in Goal 4, Priority Tactic 1 in the rationale section on page 122, after the sentence: “Several population groups possess workforce potential but encounter structural barriers to participation.”
    - 2) **Add “This includes supporting remote and hybrid work for people with diverse disabilities.”** Found on the same page under Action Steps for Priority Tactic 1, after the sentence: “WDC and workforce partners will support targeted outreach strategies for populations with barriers to employment.”

Executive Director **Bennette Misalucha** assured Chair DeMello that the amendments would be incorporated into the Plan.

- [Video 00:31:12] **Kendi Ho** from the Center on Aging, in agreement with the alignment of WIOA and CTE in a combined state plan, stated she thinks it is a great idea because you are leveraging funding for workforce development to look at pathways that are in demand, high-skill and living wage, and also including individuals with disabilities.
- [Video 00:32:15] Chair DeMello entertained a motion to approve the Plan. **Dion Dizon** moved to approve the Plan as amended, seconded by **Sean Knox**. Chair DeMello requested WDC staff to initiate a roll vote. The motion carried forward with 19 yea votes and 0 nay votes. Council member Pane Meatoga III was excused and was unable to cast a vote during the meeting.

- III. [Video 00:37:56] Certification of the Local Boards was deferred to the next board meeting, May 21, 2026.
- IV. [Video 00:38:56] Next Quarterly Board Meeting  
Tentatively scheduled for Thursday, May 21, 2026, from 9:30 am to 12:00 pm.
- V. [Video 00:39:17] Adjournment  
Meeting adjourned at 10:09 am.