

## **HAWAII STATE APPRENTICESHIP COUNCIL MEETING**

Department of Labor and Industrial Relations  
830 Punchbowl Street, Room 310  
Honolulu, HI 96813

Minutes from June 10, 2025 Meeting

Held In-Person and Virtually on Zoom

### **SAC Members Present:**

#### **Employer Representatives**

Gregg Serikaku (In-person)  
Cristina Vocalan (In-person)  
Keian Shon (In-person)  
James Hardway (Virtual)  
Constance Emory-Khenmy (Virtual) Representing Seunghye Hong

#### **Employee Representatives**

Rick Subiono (In-person)  
Robert Aquino (In-person)  
Travis Murakami (Virtual)  
Kika Bukoski (Virtual) Representing Patrick Sullivan

#### **Public Representative**

Ellen May (In-person)

### **SAC Members Absent/Excused:**

Melodie Vega – Employer Representative  
Caroline Soga – Public Representative

### **Public Attendees (In-person):**

Ikaika Naehu-Freitas – Roofers Local  
Jarred Santos – IBEW Local 1186  
Jon Perry – High Regard  
Leyton Torda – IBEW Local 1186  
Mark Pongsareth – IBEW Local 1186

### **Public Attendees (Virtual)**

Corinna Pereira – Multi-State Navigator, USDOL Office of Apprenticeship  
Erica Johnson – Regional Director, USDOL Region 6

Holly Alvarez – Heat and Frost Insulators & Allied Worker Local 132  
Ranae Keane – Hawaii Rural Water Association  
Darrell Seto – Hawaii Carpenters Apprenticeship Training

**DLIR/WDD Staff Attendees:**

In-person:

Jade Butay	Director, DLIR
William Kunstman	Deputy Director, DLIR
Maricar Pilotin-Freitas	Administrator, WDD
Leila Shar	Acting Program Officer, WDD
Edgar Fernandez	Program Specialist, WDD
Jaimee Tabangay	Program Specialist, WDD
Carol Kanayama	Program Specialist

**I. Call to Order**

SAC Chair Gregg Serikaku called the meeting to order at 9:03 am. He informed the body that he received the letters from SAC members Patrick Sullivan and Seunghye Hong requesting they be excused and authorizing their representatives to attend the meeting on their behalf. Mr. Sullivan was represented by Kika Bukoski and Ms. Hong was represented by Constance Emory-Khenmy.

Chair Serikaku conducted a roll call of the members. Ten (10) members were present: six 6 members attended in-person, and four (4) remotely.

**II. Welcome and Introductions**

- Dir. Jade Butay welcomed the SAC members and the public who were in attendance. He expressed his gratitude for the unwavering commitment and dedication of the SAC members on the apprenticeship program which contributes to the State's economic development and well-being by creating the much needed and skilled workforce. He stressed that Apprenticeship is a shared responsibility and a team effort which cannot be fulfilled without support, collaboration, and partnership.
- Maricar Pilotin-Freitas introduced herself and acknowledged and introduced Bill Kunstman, Deputy Director of DLIR.
- Other WDD staff and members of the public who were attending in person and remotely introduced themselves.

### **III. Approval of Minutes**

There were no questions or corrections to the minutes as presented.

Chair Serikaku conducted a roll call vote on the motion to approve the minutes. The SAC members unanimously approved the minutes of the March 11, 2025, SAC meeting.

### **IV. Reports/Updates**

#### **A. Workforce Development Division Report**

Ms. Maricar Pilotin-Freitas shared the following report/updates:

- There was an increase in the number of registered apprentices from the previous quarter and although it is small, we are still making gains and increasing the number of apprentices in the state. Hopefully, the number of apprentices will increase to 5,400 by the next meeting.
- Based on the SAC's recommendation, the Director approved the permanent 2 apprentices to 1 journeyworker ratio for Ironworker Apprenticeship Programs. The Director also approved the extension of the 2 apprentices to 1 journeyworker ratio for Sheet Metal Worker Apprenticeship Program up to March 2, 2030.
- WDD/DLIR received a grant from USDOL to expand registered apprenticeship in alignment with the President's vision to expand apprenticeship. Part of the grant was used to purchase 22 virtual reality headsets which are now available in the American Job Center of each county. The virtual reality exploration will help to expand apprenticeship to current trades and non-construction trades as well. Every county via the American Job Center has virtual reality headsets to provide jobseekers the ability to explore careers.

The virtual reality equipment is available at the WDD office and invited the members and the public to try it for themselves.

- Referred the SAC members to the USDOL Office of Apprenticeship Circular and Maryland Ratio Subcommittee Revised Guidance regarding ratio. She enjoined the members to review the documents which the SAC can use as a guide to adopt similar guidelines for reviewing programs/standards.

### **V. New Business**

Chair Serikaku reminded the SAC members who wants to recuse in the discussion to inform him of their recusal prior to the discussions.

A. Review and Recommendation on the High Regard Arborist Apprenticeship Program

Jon Perry, CEO of High Regard introduced himself and shared his background as Arborist and graduate of UH Manoa. He's been in the industry for 20 years and was an arborist for the City and County of Honolulu, and after he left, started his own company in 2012.

Highlights of the presentation and discussion on the proposed program include the following:

- Mr. Perry shared that the Arborist Apprenticeship Program is hybrid which consists of 6,000 hours of on-the-job training (approximately 3 years) and 440 hours of related instruction. The program includes skills component that is built into the related instruction. The related instruction is based on the Tree Care Industry Association (TCIA) curriculum, which is used in 5 states in the mainland, mostly private companies. He added that he adjusted the curriculum to make it applicable to what they are doing here. TCIA is very much involved with the ANSI (American National Standards Institute) board and the modules perfectly align with the industry standards. The TCIA course curriculum is broken down into modules where each module will address a particular area of skill and understanding. Related instruction is self-directed and not in a classroom doing the modules. Apprentices will be using the digital format of the curriculum that they can access using their phones, tablets, or computers.

Mr. Perry explained that the program consists of on-the-job learning experience, related instruction, and skills competency. The significant component of the program is the skills check off where the apprentice must perform and show skills attainment to be qualified to do what the company is doing. Apprentices will not advance to the next step unless they complete the on-the-job hours in the field and related instruction. Hours completed will be tracked internally by their HR (Human Resources) staff. Apprentices will be taught and trained in the field on how the work is done. The skills check off list will be used to assess skills attainment where the apprentice must show/demonstrate that they have the skills and perform the work safely and properly. Such skills will be checked off and signed by the sponsor once the apprentice can perform/show skills competency.

Related instruction is self-directed and not on a classroom structure doing the modules.

At this juncture, the binders containing the TCIA course curriculum were brought in and displayed at the meeting. WDD staff shared that the course curriculum was reviewed and recommended for approval by Honolulu Community College.

- SAC member Ellen May asked if somebody in the landscaping trade comes in with hours or certifications already if they will start at ground 0 or if that is something on the landscape side. Mr. Perry explained that in his view, the landscape industry and tree care industry are different in many ways. The landscape trade is 12 feet under while the tree care trade is working at heights of 12 feet to 150 feet. On the insurance side, the rate is something to consider when they go over 12 feet where the risk is elevated. The training requirements and knowledge/background working with trees is different from working with ornamental shrubs, small plants, and turf grass. Landscape and tree care industry are actually different areas so somebody coming into the industry that is not trained to be working at heights over 12 feet needs to go through the course materials.

Ms. May also asked Mr. Perry to talk about their pipeline in relation to their goal in the analysis worksheet of 4 apprentices per year and how is that scalable. Mr. Perry explained that a component of their program is to have sustainable, reliable, and safe growth. Some methods that the company uses to promote the program in terms of recruiting includes using Craigslist like channels, marketing campaigns, and advertisement through social media. The goal is to get the best people who are not only qualified but the most qualified who have a certain physical aptitude as a baseline. He wants to bring people who do not have any experience in the tree care industry and start them from 0. They will take people in depending on their background and values, which should not be hard to find.

- SAC member Robert Aquino commented that there seems to be a confusion on the age requirement where in certain areas it states 16. He also asked for clarification on demotion that's stated in the standards. Mr. Perry clarified that the age requirement will be 18 years or over.

Regarding demotion, he explained that they do not want to qualify or move people through the program and get the wage if they are not showing the correct skill set, competency and understanding in the field in relation to performance and safety. The wage is tied to experience and skill set qualification and don't want to keep people at a certain level if they are not actually showing competency.

As follow-up, Chair Serikaku asked Mr. Perry to clarify what he was saying regarding the wage progression that the apprentice who made the on-the-job (OJL) learning hours and related training instruction (RTI) hours may not make the higher wage because the evaluation of the employer shows that the apprentice is not really qualified. Chair Serikaku mentioned that based on the wage schedule, an apprentice who completes 5,500 OJL hours and 420 hours of RTI puts the wage rate at 87% of journeyworker rate and the employer does not have the option to hold paying the higher rate until the apprentice is qualified. He added that based on his experience and speaking for their program, when the apprentice makes the requirements for that step, the employer doesn't have the option to not pay the higher rate because the apprentice technically do not have, or they are not good as they should be. The employer who is doing the evaluation may have different interests on advancing a person to the higher wage level and will not follow the wage schedule. This could be a potential complaint with the Department of Labor.

Mr. Perry explained that part of the reason is that they don't want to hamstring managing the employees. In terms of passing the OJL and RTI hours, the apprentices should be at the corresponding wage step/level, but there are employees in the field whose work practices are not in line with what they (company) are doing, and sometimes employees don't take their work seriously. He said that they don't want that they are not able to manage the wage side as there should be an enforcement level. The goal is to scale people safely. The risks in the industry are so high and if he is fast tracking them, he is also liable for the level of proficiency that they have in the field. He wants some flexibility for management.

Chair Serikaku suggested that the wage schedule matrix should have column for skills set so that even if the apprentice accomplished the OJL and RTI hours, the apprentice would not advance to the next level/step until the skills/competencies are attained and checked off.

- SAC member Rick Subiono asked about safety harness used by the industry. Mr. Perry explained that they use 2 types of safety harnesses. The body fall arrest harness is used when operating dynamic loads so the individual who falls out lands on the harness. The work positioning harness holds the person in the tree to prevent falling.
- Regarding the safety measures when working around power lines, Mr. Perry clarified that the Arborist Apprenticeship Program will not touch the utility side

of the industry which is regulated. He explained that the industry has minimum approach distances, depending on the distance of the individual from the utility conductors. For electric power lines, the minimum approach distance is 10 feet of any part of the tree or branch. For Arborists, this means that their crew cannot go or move inside a 10 feet circumference of the energized line.

- Mr. Robert Aquino asked for clarification on the complaint procedure section which mentions a private review body, and if there is a procedure already set up. Mr. Perry replied that the section is designed to provide a format to formally make a complaint about the program, whether it pertains to the skills process, training gaps, or even demotion. TCIA provides resources and has several staff members that are points of contact and could help with the process. Mr. Perry added that they have employee guidelines and HR policies and practice of the company that will be used for the program.

Mr. Aquino asked a follow-up question if the grievance procedure can be shared to which Mr. Perry replied yes.

- SAC member Mr. Keian Shon asked what metrics will be used to evaluate if the program decides to change the 1 apprentice to 1 journeyworker ratio to 2 apprentices to 1 journeyworker. Mr. Perry explained that it's a new program and conservatively using a 1:1 ratio. However, they also do not want to totally bottleneck any scaling or growth and put that statement that they may increase the ratio if they can maintain the level of competency and quality of the program.
- Regarding the module on emergency response, Mr. Perry explained that it is basically their process for handling emergencies whether it's responding to down trees situations if there is a storm or an accident on roadway. He shared that there is an aerial rescue component and training on how to remove somebody either from a tree or from a lower unit.
- SAC member Mr. Travis Murakami asked if there is a First Aid/CPR component. Mr. Perry replied that their company use pro service to get the first aid/CPR training of their employees. Their company is required by OSHA standards to have training for people on the job sites. and they have to keep everybody updated on their training. The training is not necessarily through the apprenticeship program, but employees usually get the training within the first three (3) months of hire.
- Chair Serikaku asked if based on their current workforce, and if the program is approved, will the apprentices be placed on various steps and who will be

considered journeyworkers. Mr. Perry explained that currently they have 10 employees, and 2 of them have 20 years of experience. He worked with them for a very long time and he knows their level of skill and qualifications. Their intention is to put these 2 employees to journeyworker status/position. Other existing employees will be credited a certain percentage based on the number of hours and experience. They however will have to through the related instruction component of the program. The credit hours will not be based on 1:1 which means that if they worked 4 years, they will be given/credited 4 years of on-the-job hours.

- Chair Serikaku commented that based on the 1:1 ratio, if 20% of the workforce will become journeyman because they have sufficient experience, how many of them will be designated journeyworkers. Mr. Perry explained that this will be based on evaluating his employees who have been with the company for several years. However, this does not mean he will just dump anybody who got 3 years and just let them catch on the related training instruction requirements. He added that he is trying to work out on the ratio (for crediting hours) because he does not want to just dump everyone in but at the same time create a bottleneck and it's kind of finding a balance between.
- Ms. Ellen May suggested that he could possibly look at making it competitive and using a skills checklist. Mr. Perry replied that is his inclination because they're always short staff and need more people. It is always a labor issue in terms of suppling qualified people in the field. He is probably leaning on giving more credit than less but not one to one.

WDD staff Mr. Edgar Fernandez mentioned that the 2:1 ratio statement in the standards was discussed during the meetings with Mr. Perry but what is submitted in the standards for review and recommendation by the SAC is 1:1. If ever they change the ratio, this will go through the review and recommendation process by the SAC.

Mr. Perry asked if as owner, he qualifies as a journeyworker to which the SAC members replied that he would qualify as a journeyworker but he has to be on the job site with the apprentices working as such.

- Kika Bukoski asked if the program is for the company only or make it an industry standard. Mr. Perry replied that the program that was developed with the assistance of TCIA, is for their private company only. He shared that he talked to a lot of people about opening the program to other companies but there were issues that popped up including liability issues that may arise.



- Ms. Emory-Khenmy asked if Mr. Perry has an idea on the maximum number of on-the-job learning hours that he will credit towards the term of apprenticeship for prior experience. She also asked how records of previous on-the-job learning. Mr. Perry replied for existing employees, they are still trying to work out the appropriate ratio on how much will be credited but it will not be a 1 hour of prior experience to 1 hours of credit. They may consider following the same framework of big utility contractors in terms of qualifying prior experience for both existing employees and those coming from a different company. However, credit hours will probably be more in the high end for existing employees.

Regarding getting records of prior experience, Mr. Perry explained that they will send out letters to previous employers and have them list the experience that the employee did that will be used to evaluate the credit hours.

Ms. Pilotin-Freitas asked for clarification on the wage schedule in relation to credited hours. She cited as example that in the table for wage progression, if she was credited 1,000 hours of on-the-job learning and 80 hours of related instruction, she will get paid \$26.00 per hour. After working in the field, Mr. Perry determined she was high risk liability and demote her to \$24.00 per hour. She thinks that is a concern because once the level of pay of the apprentice is determined, the apprentice cannot be demoted because they are deemed high risk a liability, and it becomes subjective and no longer in accordance with the approved wage progression.

Mr. Shon suggested a statement be added in the wage progression that the apprentice will earn the wage appropriate to the OJL and related instruction hours and will continue at that rate until the next evaluation. He agreed that it becomes subjective for the employer to say that the apprentice who has been in the program for a year or 2 years yet don't have the skills and remain at \$28.00.

Mr. Perry presented a scenario where the apprentice completed is done with the hours (OJL and RTI) but for one reason or another, he (Mr. Perry) is not signing the skills component because they cannot pass the competency. He then asked if this can be a potential source of complaint with the Department of Labor for the apprentices to say they are prejudiced and not going through the wage progression. Ms. Pilotin-Freitas replied that he has the booklet (training manual) to follow and to review whether the apprentice is progressing before checking off competencies in accordance with the training plan.

Ms. Ellen May commented that the wage schedule matrix should include a skills

set column so that even if the apprentice had the hours, he (Mr. Perry) doesn't have to progress them until that skill set is met/satisfied. Mr. Perry replied that the skill set is rolled in the RTI where the apprentice cannot pass the RTI credit without the skills portion. Mr. Perry said that he is okay keeping the apprentice at the wage level, but the apprentice still has to do the training skills. He said that he just doesn't want to fast track and never have any control on whether the apprentice attains the skill. Ms. May shared that the best way to avoid that is to really tighten up the oversight. Chair Serikaku agreed that if the skill and RTI are tied in together, then skill set should be provided in the wage progression.

Chair Serikaku and other SAC members mentioned that there are missing elements and other issues/concerns pertaining to the proposed program that need to be addressed/clarified including ratio, wage progression, competencies and complaint procedures. Mr. Perry replied that he can provide the information and asked the SAC members to be specific on that they need.

Ms. Pilotin-Freitas explained the process/next steps that will be followed. The SAC members will submit to WDD their issues/concerns regarding the program/standards which will be provided to Mr. Perry for appropriate action. Once the documents are received by WDD, these will be provided to the members and get their feedback and call for a meeting. At that point, the SAC can ask further questions or recommend for approval or disapproval of the proposed program.

Mr. Fernandez mentioned that a special meeting could be held earlier than the next quarterly meeting of the SAC.

Ms. May moved to defer taking any recommendation on the proposed Arborist Apprenticeship Program pending further discussions and review on the standards of apprenticeship for the program. Mr. Subiono seconded the motion.

The members voted as follows:

Ellen May	Yes
Rick Subiono	Yes
Robert Aquino	Yes
James Hardway	Yes
Constance Emory-Khenmy	Yes
Travis Murakami	Yes
Kika Bukoski	Yes
Keian Shon	Yes
Cristina Vocalan	Yes

Gregg Serikaku	Yes
----------------	-----

The members approved the motion to defer recommendation on the proposed Arborist Apprenticeship Program.

## VI. Unfinished Business

- a. The Council will continue discussions on State Apprenticeship Program Bulletin No. 01-11, Re: Policy and Procedures for Safety Reports.

Mr. Fernandez provided a recap of the discussions on the bulletin and safety report. Issue/concerns discussed include the following:

1. Baseline and annual safety reports in relation to requests for change of ratio.
2. The current safety report form does not provide information on the number of apprentices affected by the accident/injury.
3. The bulletin does not provide guidelines on what are considered reportable accidents/injuries that should be included in the safety report. There was a recommendation to follow the OSHA guidelines.
4. There is no guideline on constitutes a reasonable number of employers who will be covered by the safety report.
5. What is considered as high incidence of accidents/injuries.

Mr. Fernandez mentioned that WDD prepared a draft of the revised safety report for review/comments of the SAC. The revised form includes a column to indicate the number of apprentices affected by the accident/injury. The number of apprentices working was changed to number of apprentices working at the time of the accident/injury for clarity.

He asked the members to review the USDOL Circular No. 2021-02 and Maryland Ratio Subcommittee Revised Guidance that can be used to formulate/ revise policies and guide the members in reviewing ratio.

Ms. Hardway commented that the bulletin mentions the baseline report which is submitted by the sponsor requesting to change of ratio. The baseline safety report pertains to accident/injuries that occurred under the current ratio and the year prior to the request for change of ratio. However, the 2 requests for change of ratio previously reviewed and recommended for approval by the SAC, the safety reports that came from different employers showed data for 5 years instead of 12 months prior to the request. Also, annual safety reports were not presented and he does not know how these reports are being tracked.

Mr. Fernandez explained that the baseline report was really intended to present accidents/injuries based on the 1:1 ratio or prevailing ratio. When sponsors requests for expanded ratio from 1:1 to 2 apprentices to 1 journeyworker. they were required to submit a baseline safety report for the 1:1 ratio. If the baseline safety report shows a high incident of accidents/injuries, that would have been the basis for the SAC to recommend for disapproval of the expanded ratio. However, back in 2011, the 1:1 baseline safety report that were received in relation to requests for expanded 2:1 ratio showed zero or low number of accidents/injuries which was the reason for the SAC to recommend approval or the 2:1 ratio. Requests for extension of the expanded ratio are supported by annual safety reports based on the 2:1 ratio that was approved. However, once the expanded ratio (2:1) was approved as permanent, the sponsor was no longer required to submit the annual safety report.

Ms. Pilotin-Freitas commented that for purposes of transparency to the SAC and because it is supposed to be annual, the safety report should be submitted regardless of there is an increase of ratio or not. Every program is supposed to be submitting the accident report annually even if the ratio is 1:1 so that the Council can be aware of how many accidents are happening within the program and if they request for increase/expanded ratio there's a basis to make a recommendation. She added that the annual report is not just for increasing a ratio but as part of the Council's role to review all standards and accidents from all the programs.

Chair Serikaku asked if the 2 apprentices to 1 journeyworker that was approved can be bumped down to 1:1 as a result of high incident of accidents/injuries. Mr. Fernandez replied that the 2:1 ratio even if approved as permanent can be rescinded by the Director if it is determined that the 2:12 ratio is not working for safety of the apprentices. He added that the Director relies on the recommendations of the SAC.

The members agreed to continue discussions on the safety report as unfinished business. The members were asked to review the USDOL and Maryland circulars which are resources that can be used to guide the SAC in reviewing programs and ratio. The members were also asked to submit their inputs/comments on the circulars and the safety report bulletin for discussion in the next meeting.

#### **b. Announcements**

- SAC member Ellen May, Center Director of Hawaii Job Corps made a brief announcement on the status of the Job Corps program nationwide. Highlights of her announcement include the following:
  - At the very end of May, they received a notice from the National Office that they were closing the Job Corps program nationwide. The notice did not use the word "close"; they said "pause". By pausing the program, this means that 99

job corps centers across the country were going to be closed, including Hawaii. It was based on the recommended budget from the Trump Administration to have no funding for the job corps program in the new budget.

- It was in the announcement that they said they were going to stop the contract operated centers and keep the Forest Service Center. There are about 20 Forest Service Centers nationwide for Federal employees.
- The closure is the result of the Transparency Report that was pulled from data after Job Corps students were brought back from COVID. During COVID, all centers across the nation were required to send students home.

The Transparency Report had 2 concerns for justifying closing the program. The first concern was high cost per student. The data that was pulled for the Transparency Report was a year after the Job Corps centers were bringing the students back after the COVID-19 pandemic and would be drastically different if they pulled the numbers for current performance for cost per student. The second concern is safety. The centers are highly regulated and required to report safety incidents for everything. Including a student having an allergic reaction. A point of pride for all Job Corps centers is the zero tolerance for violence and drugs and alcohol. Hawaii Job Corps Center is ranked at the top in the nation and the news is devastating for staff and their program.

- The National Job Corps Association which has no affiliation with the National Office filed a lawsuit with a Federal judge who granted a temporary restraining order. Right now, “business is usual” normal, and the centers are continuing operations. A hearing on the injunction is scheduled on June 17. The hearing will give guidance whether the job corps centers will continue to operate or close down the centers.
- Ms. May thanked Mr. James Hardway who wrote a letter of support for members of Congress. She also acknowledged the Congressional support for the state.
- Mr. Subiono announced that the Construction Career Day in Maui is on October 24, 2025, and Hilo on November 6, 2025.
- Mr. Aquino announced the upcoming webinar on mental health scheduled on June 17, 2025.
- Chair Serikaku announced that the next quarterly meeting is scheduled on September 9, 2025.

Mr. Fernandez mentioned that a special meeting may called to further review the standards for the Arborist program or wait for the September 9, 2025 quarterly meeting.

**c. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:53 am.

DRAFT