

Working for You...
AND THE STATE OF HAWAII

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz

HAWAII STATE SENATE - DISTRICT 22
Mililani Mauka • Wahiawā • Whitmore Village • Waipio Acres • Wheeler • Poamoho



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Majority Whip

Vice Chair: Committee on Ways and Means

Member: Committees on Education; Government Operations; Water, Land and Agriculture.



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College readiness is not one-size-fits-all

Ask students grades 6 – 12 if they plan to graduate and continue on to college. Majority of them will likely answer yes. A four-year college degree has long been the dream for many, if not all students. And with thousands of higher education institutions able to accommodate almost any student and their financial position, virtually all can go to college. This has been the focus – preparing the “college ready” graduate.

However, if we focus on just preparing the student to be globally competitive through college-readiness, what happened to focusing on the other component in assuring, or trying our best to make sure they can find a job here at home?

More often than not, the result has been the migration of our graduates to other states or countries increasing our brain drain. How do we reverse this trend?

Brain drain and a high rate in an unskilled workforce is a national problem. I've been working with a group of people from the University of Hawaii, Chaminade University and the Office of Naval Research, Department of Education, Leilehua Complex, and the Leilehua Alumni and Community Association to address this locally.

We put together a plan called Live, Learn, Work, Play.

What is Live, Learn, Work, Play?

Live, Learn, Work, Play either creates or identifies a job industry within a community. You then bring key stakeholders to the table, such as the university, the department of education, the school complex, and business and align the curriculum to match the needs of the business. The process will help in identifying how curriculum is designed and where curriculum needs to go. This helps close the skills gap that has been a challenge to many industries.



Learn
Live ^ Work , Play

For example, through LLWP our group has created the Leilehua Complex Career Pathway and we are working with the National Security Agency/Central Security Services Hawaii and the Leilehua Complex in aligning curriculum to career. The goal is to prepare our high school graduates to be career ready in the cybersecurity field. The NSA/CSS employs about 3,000 people here in the state. Of that, twenty percent are civilian employees. The NSA is experiencing a shortage of skilled workers to fill cybersecurity positions in their agency and as a result they are addressing the problem head on and are looking to high schools to start to train the students early.

I am currently working with the NSA/CSS Hawaii, DOE, and Leilehua Complex to enter into an Educational Partnership Agreement. This agreement will assist in establishing the cybersecurity career pathway in the Leilehua Complex.

The issue is common nationwide. There is a skills gap and industries are challenged with finding skilled workers to fill their vacant positions. In no way am I implying that we should not focus on college-readiness. In fact, we need both college- and career-readiness pathways. What we need to do is reassess the one-size-fits-all college readiness agenda that has been the driver behind curriculum. We need to emphasis on both college- and career-readiness for all our secondary schools. The Leilehua Complex Career Pathway is just one example of how Live, Learn, Work, Play can be a model that works. This model can be applied to complexes statewide building our local workforce, and creating jobs for our children to remain in Hawaii.

Top Left: Senator joined fellow colleagues for the Daniel K. Inouye Leaders in Action: Careers in Public Service program. Top Right: Senator and Miss Hawaii, Jeanne Kapela, were the Guest of Honor for Helemano’s Bingo Night. Middle: Senator joins Ways & Means committee members on a site visit to the Whitmore Agribusiness Tech Park. Bottom Left: Blessing and opening of the new walkway at Mililani Mauka Elementary School. Bottom Right: Senator presented Live, Learn, Work, Play to the Hawaii Asia-Pacific Affairs Leadership Program.

