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March 23, 2021

To: Representative Sean Quinlan Chair
Representative Daniel Holt, Vice Chair, and
Members of the House Committee on Economic Development

Date: Tuesday, March 23, 2021

Time: 10:15 a.m.

Place: Videoconference

From: Allicyn Tasaka, Executive Director
Workforce Development Council

**Re: HR 69 REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT, AND TOURISM TO ESTABLISH A JOB CORPS PROGRAM TO
HELP ADDRESS UNEMPLOYMENT IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND
SUPPORT ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION**

I. OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED LEGISLATION

This measure requests the establishment of a state-run Job Corps program for residents to learn new skills and increase prospects of employment within resiliency and green sectors, including local agriculture, conservation, climate adaptation, renewable energy, cesspool conservation, and technology; and requests DBEDT to consult with the Workforce Development Council (WDC).

II. COMMENTS ON HOUSE RESOLUTION

The Hawaii Job Corps Center offers free career vocational training, work-based learning in trades such as automotive and machine repair, building construction technology, certified nurse assistant, medical administrative assistant, security and protective services, landscaping, and culinary arts, among others.

The WDC allocates federal funding to the counties for services at the

American Job Centers (AJCs), a one-stop center for employment services.

The Hawaii Job Corps and other similar programs like the AJCs and WDC are working together to build Hawaii's skilled workforce.

Should this measure pass, the WDC will work with DBEDT to enhance employment opportunities for Hawaii's residents, especially in the resiliency and green sectors.



DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM

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Statement of
MIKE MCCARTNEY
Director
Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism
before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Tuesday, March 23, 2021
10:15 AM
Conference Room 312

In consideration of
HR 69
**URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND
TOURISM TO ESTABLISH A JOB CORPS PROGRAM TO HELP ADDRESS
UNEMPLOYMENT IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND SUPPORT
ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION.**

Chair Quinlan, Vice Chair Holt and members of the Committee. The Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism offers comments on HR69 that the Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism establish a job corps program to help address unemployment impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic and support economic diversification.

DBEDT does not feel it is the appropriate department to be the lead on workforce development projects and programs and related federal funding, manpower development and training programs. DBEDT, however, will be glad to assist the appropriate agency in this endeavor.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



Testimony in Support of H.R. 69, Urging DBEDT to establish a Covid-19 jobs corps
House Committee on Economic Development
Submitted by Kupu CEO John Leong, hearing date March 23, 2021

Aloha e Chair Quinlan, Vice Chair Holt, and Honorable Committee Members,

My name is John Leong, and I am the Chief Executive Officer and co-founder of Kupu, a statewide youth-focused conservation organization. On behalf of Kupu, I am pleased to testify in **strong support of H.R. 69, Urging DBEDT to establish a Covid-19 jobs corps**. As written, this measure urges the Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism to establish a job corps program to help address unemployment impacts affecting Hawai'i residents due to the Covid-19 downturn and to support economic and workforce diversification. Having administered a CARES Act-funded program that is highly similar to this proposal, Kupu agrees with the value and need of establishing such a program on a longer-term basis. Kupu notes that a program of this nature is aligned with the missions of DBEDT and other state departments.

Kupu was established in 2007, in the early stages of the Great Recession. Today we are a statewide organization, developing youth and young adults through hands-on service training in conservation and natural resource management professions. Since 2007 we have trained close to 5,000 youth in conservation, sustainability, and environmental education. Young adults served by Kupu have provided more than 3 million service hours during this time, which included planting over 1 million native plants and removing over 100,000 acres of invasive species. This has created a cumulative \$155+ million in impact for Hawai'i with a 1:3 cost to benefit ratio. We believe more investment in the green economy - as this bill provides - would enable similar economic benefits to our state, create jobs in related fields, and help diversify our economy.

In the early stages of the pandemic, Kupu saw the economic devastation happening in Hawai'i and wondered what more we could do to help. We created a new program -- in concept -- that would help unemployed and underemployed people of all ages work in the green economy during the pandemic. This program, called the Kupu 'Āina Corps, received funding and partnership from DBEDT thanks to the foresight of the legislature and the support of Governor Ige, as provided by Act 9 (SLH 2020). With this program Kupu helped over 350 displaced workers and recent graduates connect with work, training, and the dignity of helping themselves and their communities. We are humbled that our program was mentioned in the background portion of this legislation as an example of what a permanent fund of this nature could achieve.

The ecological, economic, and human benefits of the Kupu 'Āina Corps were clear. Over 90 percent of our participants completed the program, gaining its full benefits and helping 150 different host sites across the state. Based on a post-program evaluation survey completed by participants, one in three remained employed or were moving on to other employment at the end of the program. Logging over 89,000 work hours, these participants produced an economic benefit estimated at \$6.55 million, based on a formula developed by Columbia University. (This was more than twice the cost of the program.) Additionally, these participants collectively improved over 21,700 acres of land across our state. Community-based conservation corps around the nation have inquired about the program, which received national media coverage.

While the funding and authorization for the Kupu 'Āina Corps has ended, the need for this kind of program has not. We believe that future partnerships, like what is possible through a program of this nature, can continue to provide urgent relief for underemployed kama'āina and struggling green entrepreneurs in the immediate term, and gradually help the long term pivot towards the kind of diversified economy that Hawai'i needs. For these reasons, we strongly support H.B. 69.

Additionally, we commend Rep. Quinlan, this Committee's Chairman, for his foresight in authoring H.B. 1176, which would create a structure to continue the state's green job diversification efforts, either through state, federal or other funding mechanisms. Kupu notes that H.B. 1176 has passed this Committee, House Finance, the full House as well as the Senate Committee on Labor, Culture and the Arts. At this time the bill is pending in the Senate Ways and Means Committee. In its deliberations, the legislature has placed the green job corps program within the Department of Land and Natural Resources under the current version of H.B. 1176, selecting the department with the most extensive conservation expertise which administers the highly similar conservation corps program described in existing statutes.

Kupu supports this resolution and defers to the wisdom of the legislature as to whether the resolution should focus on DBEDT or more generally urge the state to continue its job corps efforts as our community recovers from the Covid-downturn. We thank Chair Quinlan and the entire committee for their consideration on this issue.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify in strong support of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

John Leong

John Leong, CEO
Kupu



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March 23, 2021

House Committee on Economic Development

Sean Quinlan, Chair

Daniel Holt, Vice-Chair

Aloha Chair Quinlan Vice-Chair Holt, and Members of the Committee,

The Young Democrats of Hawai'i (YDHI) **supports HR 69**, urging the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism to establish a job corps program to help address the unemployment impacts of the covid-19 pandemic and support economic diversification.

YDHI is a caucus under the Democratic Party of Hawai'i. Our mission is to increase the political strength of our members by providing opportunities for civic engagement, political advocacy, and participation in the Democratic Party of Hawai'i.

In 2020, our membership established our top three legislative priorities to advocate for affordable housing, healthcare, and the economy.

We support HR 69 because it directly addresses our membership's desire for a healthy economy during this pandemic in the following ways:

- It provides a needed discussion on what is the best pathway for our generation to obtain skills that prepare them for high-paying jobs right here at home.
- It initiates our State's transition away from its reliance on tourism by attracting new industries in local agriculture, conservation, climate adaptation, renewable energy, cesspool conversion, and technology.
- It addresses another critical issue for our generation, climate change. By attracting these new industries in sustainability, we can bring green jobs that can also help our State reach its 100% carbon-neutrality goal by 2045.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill, and we urge you to pass HR 69 to create the vibrant economy our membership desires and deserves.

Sincerely,
The Young Democrats of Hawai'i