

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO
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Honolulu, HI 96801-3378
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Testimony in SUPPORT of HB0734 HD1
RELATING TO WASTEWATER SYSTEMS

REPRESENTATIVE MARK J. HASHEM, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WATER & LAND

REPRESENTATIVE NICOLE E. LOWEN, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

February 11, 2025; 10:00 am; Room Number: 411

1 **Fiscal Implications:** The Department of Health (“Department”) requests that this measure be
2 considered as a vehicle to provide this needed funding so long as it does not supplant the
3 priorities and requests outlined in the Governors executive budget request.

4 **Department Position:** The Department supports this measure and offers a proposed
5 amendment.

6 **Department Testimony:** The Environmental Management Division Wastewater Branch
7 (EMD-WWB) provides the following testimony on behalf of the Department.

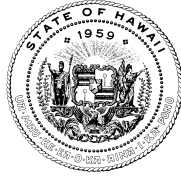
8 The Department supports this measure that requires the Department, in consultation
9 with various agencies and professionals, to review rules and propose changes. Funds are
10 appropriated for the Department to accomplish the scope of this measure.

11 **Offered Amendments:** The Department respectfully suggests inserting the sum of \$150,000 for
12 each fiscal year to hire the consultant as stated in SECTION 3, Page 4, line 14.

13 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
STATE OF HAWAII
*Ke Kia'āina o ka Moku'āina 'o
Hawaii*

SYLVIA J. LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR
STATE OF HAWAII
*Ka Hope Kia'āina o ka Moku'āina
'o Hawaii*



KALI WATSON
CHAIRPERSON, HHC
Ka Luna Ho'okele

KATIE L. LAMBERT
DEPUTY TO THE CHAIR
Ka Hope Luna Ho'okele

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HAWAIIAN HOME LANDS
Ka 'Oihana 'Āina Ho'opulapula Hawaii'i

P. O. BOX 1879
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96805

TESTIMONY OF KALI WATSON, CHAIR
HAWAIIAN HOMES COMMISSION
BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEES ON WATER & LAND
AND
ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
HEARING ON FEBRUARY 11, 2025 AT 10:00AM IN CR 411

HB 734, HD 1, RELATING TO WASTEWATER SYSTEMS

February 10, 2025

Aloha Chairs Hashem and Lowen, Vice Chairs Lamosao and Perruso, and Members of the Committees:

The Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL) **supports** this bill which 1) requires the Department of Health, in consultation with various agencies and professionals, to review rules and practices and propose changes that have the potential to make wastewater systems and cesspool upgrades more affordable without compromising water quality and 2) appropriates funds.

Approximately 2,500 cesspools exist on Hawaiian Home Lands and majority of which are ranked as priority level 1 or priority level 2 cesspools to be upgraded, converted, or connected to a sewerage system. DHHL understands the urgency to complete these conversions and connections before the year 2050. DHHL also recognizes that it is critical that cesspool conversions be affordable for homeowners or lessees of Hawaiian Home Lands and government entities.

DHHL welcomes the opportunity to consult with the Department of Health on its rules and practices and propose changes that have the potential to make wastewater systems and cesspool upgrades in Hawaii more affordable without compromising water quality.

DHHL understands that there is no simple, one method fits all ahupua'a (land division) solution toward addressing the cesspool conversion and wastewater needs of the State of Hawaii and we stand ready to work collaboratively on this issue.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony.



To: The Honorable Mark Hashem, Chair, the Honorable Rachele Lamosao, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee on Water and Land.

From: Hawai'i Reef and Ocean Coalition (by Ted Bohlen)

Re: Hearing **HB734 HD1 RELATING TO THE ENVIRONMENT**

Hearing: Tuesday, February 11, 2025, 10:00 a.m. CR325

Aloha Chair Hashem, Vice Chair Lamosao, and Energy and Members of the Committee on Water and Land.

The Hawai'i Reef and Ocean Coalition (HIROC) is a group of scientists, educators, filmmakers and environmental advocates who have been working since 2017 to protect Hawaii's coral reefs and ocean.

The Hawai'i Reef and Ocean Coalition STRONGLY SUPPORTS HB734 HD1!

Pollution from cesspools is harming the health of Hawaii's people and quality of Hawaii's waters. Hawaii has more than eighty thousand cesspools that discharge about fifty million gallons of wastewater into the State's groundwater every day. Cesspools are antiquated, substandard systems that damage public health, pollute drinking water, and lower water quality in streams, ground waters, nearshore marine areas, and the ocean. Cesspool pollution also harms public recreation and the precious coral reefs on which Hawaii's economy, shoreline, fisheries, and native species depend.

Cesspool upgrades are expensive. We need to try to find ways to make them affordable for homeowners and governments. At a time when many residents of Hawaii are struggling to make ends meet, our State may have an excellent opportunity to **save our people money by updating**

the Department of Health's rules and practices. Department rules have not been upgraded since 2015.

Administrative rules adopted almost a decade ago currently may exclude some feasible affordable solutions. Updated rules and policies adopted in other states, if adopted by the department, may improve public health and the environment MORE AFFORDABLY without compromising water quality.

This bill would require that the Department confer with various agencies, professionals, experts, and other states, review its rules and practices, and propose changes that have the potential to **make cesspool upgrades more affordable without compromising water quality.**

Please pass this bill!

Mahalo!

Hawai'i Reef and Ocean Coalition (by Ted Bohlen)

**Testimony of The Nature Conservancy
Supporting HB734, HD1, Relating to Wastewater Systems.
Committee on Water and Land
February 11, 2025 at 10:00 am**

Dear Chair Hashem, Vice Chair Lamosao, and Members of the Committee:

The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Hawai'i and Palmyra supports HB734, HD1 which would require the Department of Health, in consultation with various agencies and professionals, to review rules and practices and propose changes that have the potential to make wastewater systems and cesspool upgrades more affordable without compromising water quality.

Science conducted by TNC and partners has shown that wastewater, particularly cesspools, are detrimental to the coral reefs which protect our coastlines and underpin our economy. Without clean coastal waters reef ecosystems are put at even greater risk in the face of growing global stressors including climate change.

Cesspools cause harm to water quality within adjacent groundwater, anchialine, coral reef systems and fisheries by introducing elevated amounts of organic nitrogen and phosphorus, pathogens, and other contaminants. Contaminants emitted from cesspools can harm aquatic ecosystems by encouraging excess algal and bacterial growth and can also pose a threat to human health. Our research in He'eia, Maunalua, Olowalu, Hana and South Kohala has shown direct evidence of cesspool contamination in streams and coastal waters using a variety of bioindicators and chemical signatures.

HRS11-62 governs our state's wastewater systems and has not been updated in ten years. A thorough review of HRS11-62 would enable proven experts and working professionals to establish new best practices to the guidelines that control how the contaminants are removed from wastewater systems, including critical changes that can make cesspool upgrades cheaper while increasing protections to human and environmental health.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support HB734, HD1.

Guided by science, TNC is a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of the lands and waters upon which all life depends. The Conservancy has helped protect more than 200,000 acres of natural lands in Hawai'i and Palmyra Atoll. We manage 40,000 acres in 13 nature preserves and have supported over 50 coastal communities to help protect and restore the nearshore reefs and fisheries of the main Hawaiian Islands.

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Feb. 10, 2025

In Support of **HB734 HD1 Relating to Wastewater Systems**
House Committees on Water & Land (WAL) and Energy & Environmental Protection (EEP)
Hearing on Tue., Feb. 11, 2025, 10:00am, CR411

Aloha, Chairs Hashem & Lowen, Vice-Chairs Lamosao & Peruso and Committee Members:

On behalf of the non-profit WAI: Wastewater Alternatives & Innovations, I am writing in **strong support of HB734**. This bill requires the Hawaii Department of Health to work with consultants and industry leaders to review and update its rules and regulations to make wastewater systems and cesspool upgrades more affordable and efficient.

Cesspool conversions can be costly, and we need to try to find ways to make upgrades more **affordable**. Following the examples of other states and municipalities, the DOH guidelines for wastewater treatment (HAR 11-62) need to be updated so that they can include more efficient treatment systems, technologies and practices. For instance, Hawaii has some of the highest daily flow rates in the country (200 gallons per day per bedroom), and these inflated rates dramatically increase the costs to convert cesspools.

Hawaii has more than 83,000 cesspools across the state, discharging 52 million gallons of raw sewage each day into Hawaii's waters. Along with threats to public health and drinking water resources, new research shows that polluted wastewater poses significant harm to coral reefs and the near-shore environment. The people of Hawaii need this law to make sure their wastewater systems aren't polluting the groundwater or nearby surface waters.

WAI is an environmental non-profit dedicated to protecting our water resources by reducing sewage pollution from cesspools. We support more innovative, affordable, and eco-friendly solutions to wastewater management. Better sanitation systems protect public health and valuable natural resources like groundwater, streams, coral reefs and coastal areas.

Hawaii is struggling with serious sewage pollution, and the state has a mandate to make sure all cesspools are converted in the next two decades. This bill would upgrade the rules and regulations for wastewater treatment and could lower the costs of upgrading cesspools. Mahalo for your leadership on this issue and support of this bill.

Aloha,

Stuart Coleman

Stuart H. Coleman, Executive Director



Environmental Caucus of The Democratic Party of Hawai'i

February 10, 2025

Testimony in Support of HB734 HD1: Relating to Wastewater Systems

To: Chair Mark J. Hashem, Chair Nicole E. Lowen, Vice Chair Rachele F. Lamosao, Vice Chair Amy A. Perruso, and Members of the Committees on Water & Land and Energy & Environmental Protection

From: The Environmental Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i

Date: Tuesday, February 11, 2025, 10:00 a.m.

Place: Conference Room 411 & Videoconference

Subject: Support for HB734 HD1 - Relating to Wastewater Systems

Aloha Chairs Hashem and Lowen, Vice Chairs Lamosao and Perruso, and Members of the Committees on Water & Land and Energy & Environmental Protection,

The Environmental Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i strongly supports HB734 HD1, which requires the Department of Health, in consultation with various agencies and professionals, to review rules and practices and propose changes that have the potential to make wastewater systems and cesspool upgrades more affordable without compromising water quality. This bill also appropriates funds for this important initiative.

Key Points:

1. **Affordability of Wastewater Systems and Cesspool Upgrades:**
 - A. HB734 HD1 aims to make wastewater systems and cesspool upgrades more affordable for residents without compromising water quality.
 - B. The review of rules and practices will help identify opportunities for cost savings and more efficient processes.
2. **Comprehensive Consultation:**
 - A. The Department of Health, in consultation with various agencies and professionals, will ensure a thorough and well-informed review.
 - B. Collaboration with stakeholders will help create practical and effective proposals for improvement.

3. Protection of Water Quality:

- A. The proposed changes will prioritize maintaining high water quality standards while making systems more affordable.
- B. Ensuring safe and clean water is essential for the health and well-being of our communities.

4. Appropriation of Funds:

- A. The bill includes an appropriation of funds to support the review and implementation of proposed changes.
- B. Financial support is crucial to achieving the goals of this legislation.

Arguments in Support:

1. Economic Relief for Residents:

- A. Making wastewater systems and cesspool upgrades more affordable will provide economic relief to residents facing high costs.
- B. It supports equitable access to essential services for all community members.

2. Environmental Preservation:

- A. By improving wastewater systems and cesspool upgrades, HB734 HD1 promotes the preservation of Hawaii's natural resources.
- B. Proper waste management is essential to protecting the environment and public health.

3. Long-term Sustainability:

- A. The proposed changes will contribute to the long-term sustainability of Hawaii's water infrastructure.
- B. Investing in cost-effective and efficient wastewater systems supports the state's commitment to environmental stewardship.

4. Community Engagement:

- A. The bill encourages collaboration with various agencies and professionals, fostering community engagement in decision-making processes.
- B. Inclusive consultation ensures that diverse perspectives are considered in developing solutions.

In conclusion, we urge the Committees to favorably consider HB734 HD1 and support its passage. This bill represents a significant step towards making wastewater systems and cesspool upgrades more affordable while maintaining high water quality standards.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Melodie Aduja and Alan Burdick

Co-chairs Environmental Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i

HB-734-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/8/2025 7:54:16 AM

Testimony for WAL on 2/11/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Hilary Smith	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The cesspool current grant amount falls far short of covering the significant costs involved in this mandatory conversion process. Increasing the maximum grant amount is crucial for helping working families afford these essential environmental upgrades, which typically cost between \$20,000 to \$40,000. This enhanced financial support will accelerate Hawaii's progress toward eliminating cesspools by 2050, protecting our groundwater resources and coastal ecosystems while ensuring the financial burden doesn't overwhelm local families.

HB-734-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/8/2025 9:43:41 AM

Testimony for WAL on 2/11/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Douglas Perrine	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB734. Current DOH rules have prented me from installing a composting toilet on my property, forcing me to continue using a cesspool, which is likely only a lava tube away from the ocean. Septic is not practical on my property, and in any case does not protect the coral reef. At this rate, Hawaii will never meet its 2050 deadline for cesspool conversion. HB734 should help by requiring DOH to review its rules.

HB-734-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 12:31:49 PM

Testimony for WAL on 2/11/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
robin knox	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support doing whatever is possible to reduce red tape and costs for cesspool replacement