



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Finance
Thursday, February 20, 2025 at 12:00 p.m.

By

Darren T. Lerner, PhD
Director, Sea Grant College Program,
School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology

And

Michael Bruno, PhD
Provost
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

HB 749 HD1 – RELATING TO CESSPOOLS

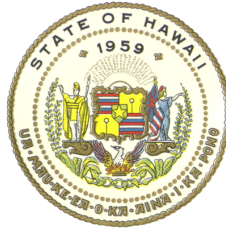
Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program (Hawai'i Sea Grant) expresses strong support for HB 749 HD1, which establishes and staffs a Cesspool Conversion Section within the Hawai'i Department of Health's Wastewater Branch. This is a critical step in addressing the State's cesspool conversion challenges by expanding the state's capacity to provide technical assistance, liaise with partner organizations and agencies, and oversee the statewide process of conversion.

The allocation of funds to establish full-time positions within this section is crucial to ensuring that Hawai'i meets its statewide cesspool conversion mandate by 2050. Dedicated personnel will enhance the Department of Health's capacity to administer and oversee thousands of cesspool conversions in the coming years. Please strongly consider offering salaries competitive with the private sector so that this Section can be appropriately staffed with capable professionals and experience little turn-over. Per the Environmental Management Division's (EMD) January 30, 2024 testimony, Hawai'i Sea Grant supports the requests of the Division regarding organizational structure.

The passage of HB 749 HD1 represents a critical step in addressing Hawaii's wastewater challenges and safeguarding our water resources. We respectfully urge the Committee to pass this bill to ensure the successful implementation of cesspool conversion efforts statewide.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.



**STATE OF HAWAII
HAWAII CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION & ADAPTATION
COMMISSION
POST OFFICE BOX 621
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809**

Co-Chairs:
Chair, DLNR
Director, OPSD

Commissioners:
Chair, Senate AEN
Chair, Senate WTL
Chair, House EEP
Chair, House WAL
Chairperson, HTA
Chairperson, DOA
CEO, OHA
Chairperson, DHHL
Director, DBEDT
Director, DOT
Director, DOH
Chairperson, DOE
Director, C+C DPP
Director, Maui DP
Director, Hawaii DP
Director, Kauai DP
The Adjutant General
Manager, CZM

**Testimony of
LEAH LARAMEE
Climate Change Coordinator on behalf of
Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission Co-Chair Mary Alice Evans and
Co-Chair Dawn N.S. Chang**

**Before the House Committee on
FINANCE**

**Thursday, February 20, 2025
12:00 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 308 & Videoconference**

**In consideration of
HOUSE BILL 749 HOUSE DRAFT 1
RELATING TO CESSPOOLS**

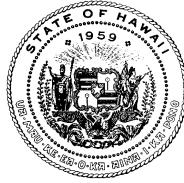
House Bill 749 HD1 creates within the Department of Health's Wastewater Branch a Cesspool Conversion Section, which shall be responsible for facilitating the conversion of cesspools within the State. Establishes and appropriates funds for positions within the Cesspool Conversion Section. **The Hawai'i Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission (Commission) supports this bill provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities indicated in the Executive Budget request.**

The Hawai'i Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission consists of a multi-jurisdictional effort between 20 different departments, committees, and counties. Cesspools are little more than holes in the ground that discharge raw, untreated human waste. Cesspools in Hawai'i release approximately 53 million gallons of untreated sewage into the ground each day. Cesspools can contaminate ground water, drinking water sources, streams and oceans with disease-causing pathogens such as bacteria, protozoa and viruses that can cause gastroenteritis, Hepatitis A, conjunctivitis, leptospirosis, salmonellosis and cholera.

Removal of cesspools for all properties within the Sea Level Rise Exposure Area (SLR-XA), is imperative to the health of nearshore waters and for members of the public accessing coastal resources. Removal may not be achievable by 2050 as directed by Act 125, Session Laws of Hawai'i 2017, without financing support for replacement. The Commission's 2022 update to the *Sea Level Rise Vulnerability and Adaptation Report* Recommended Action 6.4 counsels that the State should expand policy directives beyond the existing income tax credits and requirement for

removal by 2050. Cesspools on the shoreline and in the coastal zone will be an increasing source of nonpoint source pollution as groundwater rises and coastal erosion accelerates. The capacity this bill provides is needed to support cesspool conversion and protect our waters.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this measure.



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO
P. O. Box 3378
Honolulu, HI 96801-3378
doh.testimony@doh.hawaii.gov

**Testimony in SUPPORT of HB0749 HD1
RELATING TO CESSPOOLS.**

REPRESENTATIVE KYLE T. YAMASHITA, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

February 20, 2025; 12:00 pm; Room Number: 308

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 with proposed amendments.

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

7 The Department appreciates that this measure creates a new cesspool conversion
8 section within the Department's WWB and appropriates moneys for three (3) full-time
9 equivalent (FTE) permanent positions (i.e., two (2) Engineer III positions and one (1)
10 Accountant IV position). In addition to the six (6) tasks described in the proposed measure at
11 Section 2, Page 3, lines 4-16, the positions would implement the Hawai'i Cesspool Compliance
12 Pilot Grant Program. The duties and responsibilities of these positions for the Pilot Grant
13 Program include, but are not limited to:

- 14 1) Developing program and outreach material before the launch of the program (e.g.,
15 revised application, revised website, revised information flyers);
16 2) Conducting outreach with the public before the launch of the program;

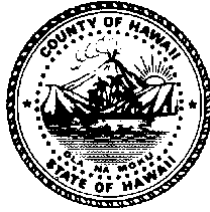
- 3) Intaking questions via phone and email and responding with answers;
- 4) Intaking of applications;
- 5) Reviewing applications, tax returns, property ownership documents and files and determining eligibility;
- 6) Issuing eligibility letters;
- 7) Issuing waiting list emails;
- 8) Issuing denial emails;
- 9) Managing progress of projects and keeping applicants/grantees on schedule;
- 10) Intaking receipts, tax forms, and other financial documents;
- 11) Drafting, routing, and issuing grant agreements;
- 12) Reviewing receipts, licensed engineers, licensed contractor, licensed supply/equipment/materials companies; and
- 13) Processing purchase orders.

Offered Amendments: The Department respectfully suggests the following revisions to the proposed measure. Additions appear as underlined and deletions appear as strikeouts.

SECTION 3, Page 4, lines 1-8: “There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$280,000 or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 to establish three full-time equivalent (3.0 FTE) permanent positions within the cesspool conversion section established pursuant to section 342D- , Hawaii Revised Statutes.”

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

C. Kimo Alameda, Ph.D.
Mayor



William V. Brillhante, Jr.
Managing Director

Merrick Nishimoto
Deputy Managing Director

County of Hawai'i ~ Office of the Mayor

25 Aupuni Street, Suite 2603 • Hilo, Hawai'i 96720 • Phone (808) 961-8211 • Fax (808) 961-6553
KONA: 74-5044 Ane Keohokālole Hwy., Bldg C • Kailua-Kona, Hawai'i 96740
Phone (808) 323-4444 • Fax (808) 323-4440

TO: Rep. Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair
Committee on Finance

FROM: C. Kimo Alameda, PhD. Mayor

DATE: February 19, 2025

SUBJECT: **SUPPORT OF HB749, RELATING TO CESSPOOLS**

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and esteemed members of the Committee,

I strongly support HB 749, HD1, which addresses the urgent need to reduce cesspool pollution in Hawaii by creating a dedicated cesspool conversion section within the Department of Health's wastewater branch. This measure is critical for protecting public health, preserving our drinking water, and safeguarding the State's fragile coral reefs, which are essential to our economy and environment.

Hawai'i's 80,000 cesspools discharge millions of gallons of untreated wastewater into groundwater daily, threatening the health of residents, ecosystems, and recreational resources. By establishing a cesspool conversion section, this bill will streamline public outreach, provide financial and technical assistance to homeowners, and secure federal and state funding to expedite cesspool upgrades or replacements.

This proactive approach ensures that cesspool owners have the resources and guidance needed to comply with statewide conversion mandates while protecting the waters that are vital to Hawai'i's communities and economy.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.



February 20, 2025

The Honorable Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair

House Committee on Finance

State Capitol, Conference Room 308 & Videoconference

RE: House Bill 879, HD1, Relating to Cesspool Conversions

HEARING: Thursday, February 20, 2025, at 12:00 p.m.

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Lyndsey Garcia, Director of Advocacy, testifying on behalf of the Hawai'i Association of REALTORS® ("HAR"), the voice of real estate in Hawaii and its over 10,000 members. HAR **supports** House Bill 879, HD1, which establishes a Cesspool Conversion Section within the Department of Health's Wastewater Branch, which shall be responsible for facilitating the conversion of cesspools within the State. Establishes and appropriates funds for positions within the Cesspool Conversion Section. Effective 7/1/3000.

Hawai'i REALTORS® supports the goal of protecting our drinking water, streams, ground water, and ocean resources. We recognize that cesspool conversion is important to preserve our environment. There are approximately 83,000 cesspools divided into three priorities¹ across the State and to convert 83,000 cesspools by 2050, at least 3,320 cesspools would need to be converted per year. As such, a Department of Health Wastewater Branch Cesspool Conversion section with additional employees may help with homeowner outreach and education as well as facilitating different funding and financing options for the conversion of cesspools in the state.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

¹ University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program. *Hawai'i Cesspool Prioritization Tool*.
<https://seagrant.soest.hawaii.edu/cesspools-tool/>



Feb. 18, 2025

In Support of **HB749 HD1 Relating to Cesspools**
House Committee on Finance (FIN)
Hearing on Thur., Feb. 20, 2025, 12:00pm, CR308

Aloha, Chair Yamashita, Vice-Chair Takenouchi and Committee Members:

On behalf of the non-profit WAI: Wastewater Alternatives & Innovations, I am writing in **strong support of HB749**. This bill would create a new Cesspool Conversion Section at the Department of Health to work with the state, counties, communities and individual homeowners to convert cesspools across the state. I was a member of the State's Cesspool Conversion Working Group for four years (2018-2022), and the creation of a new Cesspool Section was one of the highest priorities in our Final Report.

Cesspool conversions can be costly, and we need to try to find ways to make upgrades more **affordable**. The bill would appropriate funds for three positions within the new Cesspool Conversion Section who would help with expediting the permitting process, updating old regulations, applying for federal grants and finding funds to help homeowners with the costs of conversion. Due to limited staffing in the Wastewater Branch, DOH needs these dedicated positions to help meet the state mandate under Act 125 (2017) to convert all cesspools by 2050.

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. Many reefs across the state like in Ma'alaea have been so badly damaged that they went from 80% to 8% coverage of the sea floor and are basically dead 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 create a new Cesspool Conversion Section at DOH to help the state, the counties, communities and individual homeowners with the process, while also reducing the time, obstacles and costs of upgrading cesspools. Mahalo for your leadership on this issue and support of this bill.

Aloha,

Stuart Coleman

Stuart H. Coleman, Executive Director

**Testimony of The Nature Conservancy
Supporting HB 749 HD1, Relating to Cesspools.
Committee on Finance
February 20, 2025 at 12:00 pm**

Dear Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Hawai'i and Palmyra supports HB749 HD1, which would create within the Department of Health's Wastewater Branch a Cesspool Conversion Section responsible for facilitating the conversion of cesspools within the State. The bill would also establish and appropriate funds for positions within the Cesspool Conversion Section.

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, Maunaloa, 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.

Effectively upgrading cesspools to technologies that can remove nutrients and contaminants that are harmful to reefs is critical for their long-term health. However, our state faces major barriers to adopting these technologies, including a lack of capacity at the Department of Health. Every year hundreds of cesspools are upgraded, but the existing Wastewater Branch is stretched thin in ensuring that alternative, reef-friendly technologies are approved. By creating a cesspool division HB749 would be key to adding that capacity.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of HB749 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.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Duke E. Ah Moo Kris Billeter Dr. C. Tana Burkert Anne S. Carter (Chair) Ka'iulani de Silva Daniel J. Dunn Dave Eadie
Jan Elliott Matt Emerson Hon. Judith Epstein Dr. Alan M. Friedlander Benjy Garfinkle Sean A. Hehir Puni Jackson
Brett MacNaughton Janet Montag Alicia Moy John R. Sabas Bradley E. Smith Julie Smolinski Vern Yamanaka

Ihupani Advisory Council: Christopher J. Benjamin Kenton T. Eldridge Eiichiro Kuwana Duncan MacNaughton
Jean E. Rolles Crystal K. Rose Nathan E. Smith

Founders: Samuel A. Cooke Herbert C. Cornuelle



To: The Honorable Representative Kyle Yamashita, Chair, the Honorable Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair, and Members of the Finance Committee.

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

Re: **Hearing HB749 HD1 RELATING TO CESSPOOLS**

Hearing: Thursday February 20, 2025 12:00 p.m.

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Finance Committee!

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 HB749 HD1!

There are about 83,000 cesspools in Hawaii that are dumping about 50 million gallons every day into Hawaii's groundwater, drinking water, streams, and ocean and harming our coral reefs. By law (the mandate of section 342D-72, Hawaii Revised Statutes), all 83,000 cesspools must be upgraded to a system approved by the Department by 2050.

The Department of Health will need to facilitate compliance, and to administer thousands of cesspool upgrades in the coming years. Overseeing the upgrading of thousands of cesspools is a huge task. The Department will need to seek and manage grants and other financing, develop and manage comprehensive public information and outreach, and form partnerships with counties, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector relating to the department's responsibilities under this section.

The existing DOH Wastewater Branch is not able to take on these major additional tasks. A new section is needed with additional personnel dedicated to facilitating the conversion of cesspools within the State.

This Act will create a new cesspool conversion section within the Department's wastewater branch and establish and appropriate moneys for new positions within the new section. The

bill proposes a modest funding increase for three full-time equivalent employees dedicated to working on cesspool upgrades.

Given the serious pollution caused by cesspools, **this bill is needed to protect public health and the environment by helping the Department to manage the huge cesspool upgrade effort.**

Please pass this bill!

Mahalo!

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



February 18, 2025

House Committee on Finance
Hawai'i State Legislature
Via Electronic Transmission

Re: Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 749, Relating to Cesspools
Hearing: Thursday, February 20, 2025, 12:00 PM CR 308 Via Videoconference

To: The Honorable Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the committee,

The Surfrider Foundation, Hawai'i region, is testifying in **strong support of HB749** Relating to Cesspools. This bill establishes a Cesspool Conversion Section within the Department of Health's (DOH) Wastewater Branch to facilitate cesspool conversions statewide and funds key positions within this new section.

Surfrider Foundation is a grassroots activist network dedicated to the protection of our oceans, waves, and beaches. As part of our water quality initiative, we maintain a citizen-science water quality monitoring program called the Blue Water Task Force (BWTF) on Kaua'i, Maui, and O'ahu that tests for enterococcus, a fecal indicator bacteria at 80 sites regularly. BWTF sites are often selected to monitor water quality around sites with high concentration of coastal cesspools such as Kāne'ohe bay at Kahalu'u. Due to these cesspools, the water near and around Kahalu'u regularly exceeds state public health standards.

Without mechanisms to facilitate compliance with 342D-72, Hawai'i Revised Statutes, we will continue to pollute our coastal and freshwaters, threatening both environmental and public health. The new Cesspool Conversion Section will help homeowners, speed up the conversion process and bring in more funding to help cover the costs.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony in support of HB749, submitted on the behalf of the Surfrider Foundation's three Hawai'i chapters and members.

Sincerely,

Hanna Lilley
Hawai'i Regional Manager
Surfrider Foundation

Hawai'i Ocean Legislative Task Force



February 20, 2025

House Committee on Finance
Hawai'i State Legislature
Via Electronic Transmission

Re: Testimony in SUPPORT of HB749 HD1, Relating to Cesspools

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee,

We are writing in strong support of HB749 HD1 Relating to Cesspools. This bill creates a Cesspool Conversion Section within the Department of Health's Wastewater Branch, which will be responsible for facilitating the conversion of cesspools across the state. It also establishes and allocates funding for positions within the Cesspool Conversion Section.

The Ocean Legislative Task Force is championing cesspool conversion bills because it is our kuleana to protect the oceans that sustain us. Outdated cesspools in Hawaii release untreated waste, polluting water sources, harming marine life, and threatening public health. With tens of thousands across the state, they endanger coral reefs, which are vital to marine ecosystems, cultural identity, and the economy.

By addressing this issue, we uphold our duty to protect Hawaii's waters for future generations. Our reefs and oceans define our islands, and it is critical to act now before further damage occurs.

The Ocean Legislative Task Force is a coalition of over 100 individuals from diverse environmental organizations, working together to tackle pressing marine challenges. Through collaboration, expertise, and advocacy, we drive impactful solutions to safeguard Hawaii's oceans and ensure their resilience for years to come.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this important measure.



TO: House Committee on Finance
Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

FROM: Lynn Miyahira representing Public Access to SunScreens (PASS) Coalition

DATE: Feb 20, 2025

TIME: 12:00 pm

Re: HB 749

Position: SUPPORT

The [Public Access to SunScreens](#) (PASS) Coalition is a multi-stakeholder coalition composed of public health groups, dermatologists, sunscreen manufacturers, and leading advocates for skin cancer patients. We also support efforts that protect our coral reefs.

We support this measure.

Hawai'i faces a severe cesspool pollution problem, with over 83,000 cesspools discharging approximately 50 million gallons of raw sewage daily into our groundwater, streams, and oceans. This not only threatens our drinking water but also harms coral reefs that are vital to Hawai'i's ecosystem and tourism economy.

By law, all 83,000 cesspools must be upgraded by 2050—a monumental task that requires a coordinated and well-resourced effort. HB 749 provides a critical solution by establishing a dedicated Cesspool Conversion Section within the Department of Health (DOH). This section would be tasked with overseeing cesspool upgrades, managing grants and financing, conducting public outreach and education, and fostering partnerships with counties.

The DOH Wastewater Branch cannot be expected to handle the scale and complexity of this mandate with current staffing. Without additional resources, the state cannot effectively meet its obligations or protect public health and the environment. HB 749 proposes a modest but essential increase in funding to create new full-time positions within the DOH to focus exclusively on cesspool conversion.

This modest investment is essential to tackle one of Hawai'i's most pressing environmental and public health challenges. Establishing this dedicated section will ensure the state has the capacity to manage this massive undertaking effectively, safeguard our natural resources, and protect the health of future generations.

We urge your support for HB 749 to ensure Hawai'i takes this critical step forward in addressing its cesspool pollution crisis.

Mahalo you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Lynn Miyahira
Public Access to SunScreens (PASS) Coalition



Date: February 19, 2025

To: Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the Committee on Finance of the House of Representatives

Re: HB 749 HD1, Relating to Cesspools
Thursday February 20, 2025
VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE
Conference Room 308
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street

From: Erica Perez- Program Manager and Head of Sanitation
eperez@coral.org
Coral Reef Alliance (CORAL)

Subject: Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 749 HD1, Relating to Cesspools

I am testifying in Support of HB 749 HD1 relating to cesspools on behalf of the Coral Reef Alliance (CORAL) and a concerned community member of Moku o Keawe. This bill establishes a Cesspool Conversion Section within the Department of Health's Wastewater Branch to facilitate cesspool conversions statewide and funds key positions within this new section. As a member of The Ocean Legislative Task Force, we advocate for cesspool conversion as part of our kuleana to care for the oceans that sustain us.

CORAL has been working to remove cesspools across Hawaii for over ten years. We watch as communities like Puakō, Kahalu'u, Hana, Keaukaha, invest millions of dollars and countless hours to identify solutions to save coral reefs and protect human health, only to be stalled due to lack of access to funding and capacity at the State and County levels. This bill will create the needed capacity within DOH to address these barriers and establish the resources to support their communities.

With more than 88,000 cesspools across the state contributing 53 million gallons per day of raw sewage to our groundwater and ocean, cesspools pose a severe threat to coral reefs, human health, and our economy. Coral reefs are essential to shoreline protection for sea level rise, cultural practices, and community well-being. HB 749 HD1 will establish



the needed resources within DOH to address these capacity shortfalls that prevent solutions from being implemented.

Our coral reefs and oceans are vital to Hawaii's identity and future. By addressing this pressing issue, we protect ecosystems that define our islands and ensure the health of our waters for future generations. The time to act is now—our oceans cannot wait. We are a member of The Ocean Legislative Task Force, a group of over 100 individuals from diverse environmental organizations, working together to protect marine ecosystems. Our collective expertise allows us to craft impactful strategies to protect Hawaii's waters.

In closing, CORAL Supports HB 749 HD1. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this important measure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Erica Perez', on a light-colored background.

Erica Perez
Program Manager and Head of Sanitation
eperez@coral.org
Coral Reef Alliance



Environmental Caucus of The Democratic Party of Hawai'i

February 19, 2025

TO: Chair Kyle T. Yamashita, Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee on Finance

Hearing Date: Thursday, February 20, 2025 **Time:** 12:00 p.m. **Place:** Conference Room 308 and Videoconference

FROM: Environmental Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawaii

SUBJECT: Testimony in Support of HB749 HD1 - Relating to Cesspool Conversion

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee,

The Environmental Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawaii strongly supports HB749 HD1, which establishes a Cesspool Conversion Section within the Department of Health's Wastewater Branch, responsible for facilitating the conversion of cesspools within the State. Additionally, it establishes and appropriates funds for positions within the Cesspool Conversion Section.

Key Points

- **Facilitation of Cesspool Conversion:** This bill establishes a dedicated section within the Department of Health to streamline and oversee the conversion of cesspools across the state.
- **Appropriation of Funds:** The bill appropriates necessary funds to support the establishment of the Cesspool Conversion Section and the hiring of essential personnel.
- **Environmental and Public Health:** Converting cesspools to more efficient wastewater systems is crucial for protecting Hawai'i's water quality, public health, and environment.

Arguments in Support

The establishment of a Cesspool Conversion Section within the Department of Health's Wastewater Branch is a critical step toward addressing the ongoing issue of cesspool pollution in Hawai'i. Cesspools are a significant source of groundwater contamination, which poses serious risks to public health and the environment. By facilitating the conversion of cesspools to more effective wastewater systems, this bill aims to mitigate these risks and protect our natural resources.

HB749 HD1 ensures that there is a dedicated and organized effort to address cesspool conversion, supported by the necessary funding and personnel. This will enable the Department of Health to effectively manage and expedite the conversion process, ultimately leading to cleaner water and a healthier environment for all residents of Hawai'i.

We commend the Committee for considering this important legislation and urge its passage. The Environmental Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawaii stands ready to assist in any way possible to ensure the successful implementation of HB749 HD1.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

Mahalo nui loa,

Melodie Aduja and Alan Burdick

Co-Chairs, Environmental Caucus Democratic Party of Hawaii

HB-749-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 12:11:38 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 12:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

A dedicated cesspool section within the DOH is urgently needed to advance Hawaii's last-in-the-nation conversion from cesspools to sanitary and eco-safe wastewater treatment. Please pass HB749. Mahalo.

HB-749-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 5:16:44 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 12:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jack Kittinger, PhD	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments: Please support this important Cesspool Conversion bill.

HB-749-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 8:48:41 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 12:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Betsy Scolnik	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

DO YOUR JOBS AND PASS THESE BILLS TO CONVERT CESSPOOLS AND CLEAN UP
OUR ISLAND. OUR HEALTH AND SAFETY SHOULD BE IMPORTANT TO YOU

HB-749-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 9:05:23 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 12:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lavorn Sparks	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please vote to clean up our sewage and make Hawai'i a clean place for our children and grandchildren. Polluted streams due to cesspools is a correctable travisty.

HB-749-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 9:11:36 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 12:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Younghee Overly	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you for hearing HB749. Please pass this measure to promote private-public-NGO partnerships to ensure efficient cesspool conversions.

HB-749-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 11:05:24 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 12:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jay Henderson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

i support this bill because it

Establishes Cesspool Conversion Section: Creates a dedicated Cesspool Conversion Section within the Department of Health's Wastewater Branch to streamline the conversion process and ensure compliance with state mandates.

Supports Public Outreach and Education: The new section will inform cesspool owners about available conversion options, financial assistance, and compliance requirements, promoting community awareness and engagement.

Secures Funding for Conversion: The bill facilitates the management of state, federal, and private funding sources to assist homeowners in converting their cesspools to approved wastewater systems.

Enhances Statewide Collaboration: Promotes partnerships with counties, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector to ensure efficient and cost-effective cesspool conversions across Hawaii.

HB-749-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 11:55:42 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 12:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michael Becker	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support

HB-749-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 1:07:00 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 12:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Arlene Twomey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB749 because it

Establishes Cesspool Conversion Section: Creates a dedicated Cesspool Conversion Section within the Department of Health’s Wastewater Branch to streamline the conversion process and ensure compliance with state mandates.

Supports Public Outreach and Education: The new section will inform cesspool owners about available conversion options, financial assistance, and compliance requirements, promoting community awareness and engagement.

Secures Funding for Conversion: The bill facilitates the management of state, federal, and private funding sources to assist homeowners in converting their cesspools to approved wastewater systems.

Enhances Statewide Collaboration: Promotes partnerships with counties, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector to ensure efficient and cost-effective cesspool conversions across Hawaii.

HB-749-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 2:35:08 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 12:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carissa Cabrera	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I live on windward O‘ahu and the amount of wastewater in our coastal ecosystems during and after rains is repulsive. I have been personally sick from it 10 years ago before I knew better (considering signage is minimal to nonexistent) which was one of the most traumatizing experiences of my life. Cesspool conversions are our immediate solution for public health, in addition to help mitigate harm on our vulnerable and fragile coral reef ecosystems. I support HB749 and I hope lawmakers will prioritize the health of our people, ocean, and keiki.

Carissa

HB-749-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 3:06:29 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 12:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lisa H. Gibson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strong support

HB-749-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 4:25:04 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 12:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Having a team at DOH dedicated to cesspool elimination is necessary to make it happen. Look at the logistics, we have a lot of work to do before 2050 and the sooner the better