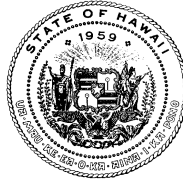


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII
KE KIA'ĀINA O KA MOKU'ĀINA 'OHAWAI'I



KENNETH S. FINK, MD, MGA, MPH
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

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 HB0879 HD1
RELATING TO CESSPOOL CONVERSIONS.**

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 comments.

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

7 The Department is supportive of this proposed measure as long as either HB0749 or
8 SB0675 is passed because three (3) additional full-time equivalent (3.0 FTE) positions within the
9 Department's Wastewater Branch are required to implement this cesspool compliance pilot
10 grant project. The duties and responsibilities of these positions for the cesspool compliance
11 pilot grant program include, but are not limited to:

- 12 1) Developing program and outreach material before the launch of the program
13 (e.g., revised application, revised website, revised information flyers);
14 2) Conducting outreach with the public before the launch of the program;
15 3) Intaking questions via phone and email and responding with answers;
16 4) Intaking of applications;

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

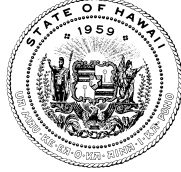
12 The Department received many inquiries about whether the grant award is tax exempt.
13 The Department requested approval in December 2023 from the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture
14 and U.S. Secretary of the Treasury to approve the Hawai'i Cesspool Compliance Pilot Grant
15 Program as a tax-exempt incentive program, but has not receive confirmation of federal
16 approval from either Secretary. It is the Department's understanding that the Hawai'i
17 Department of Taxation is waiting for the federal Secretaries to make a determination before
18 making a State-level determination.

19 **Offered Amendments:** None.

20 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
Hawai'i*

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



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 Hawai'i

P. O. BOX 1879
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96805

TESTIMONY OF KALI WATSON, CHAIR
HAWAIIAN HOMES COMMISSION
BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
HEARING ON FEBRUARY 20, 2025 AT 12:00PM IN CR 308

HB 879, HD 1, RELATING TO CESSPOOL CONVERSIONS

February 19, 2025

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

The Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL) **supports** this bill which 1) increases the maximum grant amount for the Cesspool Compliance Pilot Grant Project 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 supports increasing the maximum grant amount, given the increase in costs to cover all upgrade or conversion costs. DHHL also supports providing funds for the cesspool compliance pilot grant project.

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 support this measure that increases the maximum grant amount for the Cesspool Compliance Pilot Grant Project and appropriates funds for the cesspool compliance pilot grant project.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony

OFFICE OF CLIMATE CHANGE SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCY

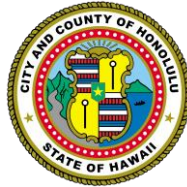
KE KE'ENA LOLI ANIAU MĀLAMA 'ĀINA A ME KE OLA LOA

CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

650 SOUTH KING STREET, 11th FLOOR • HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

PHONE: (808) 768-2277 • EMAIL: resilientoahu@honolulu.gov • INTERNET: www.resilientoahu.org

RICK BLANGIARDI
MAYOR
MEIA



BENJAMIN SULLIVAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR &
CHIEF RESILIENCE OFFICER
PO'O HO'OKŌ & KAHU OLA LOA

KEALOHA FOX
DEPUTY DIRECTOR &
CHIEF RESILIENCE OFFICER
HOPE PO'O & HOPE KAHU OLA LOA

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2025 12:00 P.M.

STATE OF HAWAII
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 879, HD1
RELATING TO CESSPOOL CONVERSIONS

BY,

BENJAMIN SULLIVAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND CHIEF RESILIENCE OFFICER
OFFICE OF CLIMATE CHANGE, SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCY

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

The City and County of Honolulu ("City") Office of Climate Change, Sustainability and Resiliency ("Resilience Office") **supports** HB879, HD1, which increases funding and maximum grant amounts for the Cesspool Compliance Pilot Grant Project.

The City's climate adaptation strategy, *Climate Ready O'ahu*, recognizes the critical need to increase partnerships and investments to support cesspool conversions across O'ahu. A recent study commissioned by the Resilience Office found that of the 11,000 cesspools on O'ahu, over 1,000 of those cesspools are located within the sea-level rise exposure area (SLR-XA). Experienced and future climate change impacts increase the urgency of this need to support cesspool conversion in high priority areas to protect our drinking water and the health of nearby environments.

Our residents require support to meet state mandates. The demand for support is so high that the five million dollars initially appropriated for the grant project by Act 153 (2022) was accounted for within weeks. This rapid depletion of funds underscores the immense need for and interest in this grant program. Accounting for inflation, we estimate the average conversion cost in 2025 to be over \$28,000. This presents a tremendous financial burden on top of the already increasing costs of living across the state.

Chair Yamashita and Vice Chair Takenouchi
HB879, HD1
February 20, 2025
Page 2

The Resilience Office supports increasing the maximum grant amount to at least \$30,000 as originally proposed in HB879. Increasing the maximum grant amount without also increasing the total amount appropriated to the pilot program would likely result in a decrease in the number of cesspools that can be converted. Based on the strong demand from applications in 2023 and total volume of conversions needed, the Resilience Office strongly supports increasing total program funding and funding for any necessary administrative costs.

Support for this program can mean the difference for the success of any cesspool conversion project on O'ahu. It will additionally help ensure that low- and moderate-income homeowners, who often lack the resources for costly conversions, have equitable access to solutions.

It is imperative to convert Hawai'i's cesspools to protect our residents' health and the health of our ecosystems. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB879. HD1.



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 increases the maximum grant amount for the Cesspool Compliance Pilot Grant Project. Appropriates funds. 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. It is crucial that we properly plan and find ways to assist communities and homeowners as resources and manpower are limited, especially on the neighbor islands. Costs will vary greatly depending on resources, labor, permitting delays, property terrain, and other variables. According to the Cesspool Conversions Finance Research Report prepared for the Department of Health, "historical costs of cesspool upgrades to approved systems range widely from approximately \$9,000 to \$60,000 or more depending on the wastewater system capacity (based on bedroom count), technology, and location or site constraints."²

In 2022, the Legislature passed Act 153 to offer rebates of up to \$20,000 to help homeowners with the costs of conversion. Demand was so great that that \$5 million in grants ran out in just two weeks.³ With the high demand of Act 153, HAR supports reestablishing a pilot grant project to help homeowners who are unable to afford to

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

² Carollo. (January 21, 2021). *Cesspool Conversion Finance Research Report*. <https://health.hawaii.gov/wastewater/files/2021/02/financefinalreportr.pdf>

³ Spectrum News Hawaii. (July 6, 2023). 83,000 Hawaii Homes Dispose of Sewage in Cesspools. Rising Sea Levels Will Make Them More of a Mess. spectrumlocalnews.com/hi/hawaii/news/2023/07/06/83-000-hawaii-homes-dispose-of-sewage-in-cesspools--rising-sea-levels-will-make-them-more-of-a-mess



808-733-7060



1259 A'ala Street, Suite 300
Honolulu, HI 96817



808-737-4977

convert without assistance. Additionally, a higher grant amount can help address rising costs of cesspool conversion.

HAR would also note that the grant money received would be considered income and homeowners would be taxed on that amount.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this measure.





Feb. 18, 2025

In Support of **HB879 HD1 Relating to the Environment**
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 **support of HB879 HD1**. This bill would expand on the successful pilot program under Act 153 to help eligible homeowners by providing grants of \$30,000 to help pay the cost of converting their cesspools. The bill would also allot appropriate funding to the Department of Health to manage the program and the grants to homeowners.

Cesspool conversions can be costly, and we need to try to find ways to make upgrades more **affordable** while also making them **effective**. Under Act 125, all cesspools need to be converted by 2050, and the price of conversion is only getting more expensive with time. With prices ranging from \$25k to \$50k (depending on site conditions, soil types, etc.), the amount of these grants need to be raised from \$20k to \$30k to help homeowners in Priority Areas 1 & 2. Because many people can't afford the upfront costs or wait to be reimbursed, I would suggest that the rebates be done as grants that can be paid in installments so they can pay engineers and contractors.

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. Many places like Puako in Hawaii County and Ma'alaea in Maui have lost most of their coral reefs. Degraded reefs are not only bad for the environment, but they are bad for tourism, the economy and the protection of the Islands from storms, floods, hurricanes and tsunamis.

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 build on a successful pilot program and allow the Department of Health to give grants to eligible homeowners and help them with the cost of converting their cesspools. Mahalo for your leadership on this issue and support of this bill.

Aloha,

Stuart Coleman

Stuart H. Coleman, Executive Director



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 HB879 HD1 RELATING TO CESSPOOL CONVERSIONS**

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 HB879 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.

Cesspool upgrades are expensive. The cost depends on site-specific conditions, but the cost to convert a cesspool to a septic system or an aerobic treatment unit system is often over \$30,000. We need to try to find ways to **make upgrades more affordable** to homeowners and governments.

The Legislature has recognized that the requirement to upgrade or convert a cesspool imposes a financial burden on low- and moderate-income families. In Act 153, session laws of 2022, the legislature established in the department of health a **pilot grant project to assist with conversion costs for low- and moderate-income property owners**, including lessees on Hawaiian home lands, located in an area identified as priority level 1 or 2 in the University of Hawaii's 2021 Hawaii cesspool hazard assessment and prioritization tool. Act 153 (2022) provided grants up to \$20,000 to qualifying low and moderate income homeowners. The demand was high for these grants and it was fully subscribed within weeks. The appropriation under Act 153 lapsed as of June 30, 2024.

At a time when many residents of Hawaii are struggling to make ends meet, our State has an excellent opportunity to **save some low and moderate income owners money by approving this grant program**. This bill would appropriate funding for grants under the program established in Act 153, session laws of 2022, to assist with conversion costs for certain low- and moderate-income property owners.

This bill increases the maximum grant to a blank amount. Hawai'i Reef and Ocean Coalition recommends a maximum of \$30,000 based on recent experience. The bill provides funding in each of the next two fiscal years.

This bill would enable a sizable number of low and moderate income owners to upgrade their cesspools.

Please pass this bill to enable these low and moderate income owners to upgrade their cesspools!

Mahalo!

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



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

Re: HB 879

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.

Hawaii 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 Hawaii's ecosystem and tourism economy.

Cesspool upgrades are expensive, and we must find ways to make them more affordable for homeowners and governments. Act 153 (2022) provided grants of up to \$20,000 for qualifying low- and moderate-income homeowners, and the demand for these grants was overwhelming, with funds being fully subscribed within weeks. However, funding under that law has since expired, leaving many homeowners unable to afford upgrades.

HB 879 builds on the success of Act 153 by increasing the maximum grant amount to \$30,000 to reflect rising costs and by allocating \$5 million annually for the next two fiscal years. This bill would provide critical financial support to a sizable number of low- and moderate-income homeowners, enabling them to afford cesspool upgrades and helping the state make meaningful progress in addressing this crisis.

This investment is essential to protect Hawaii's water quality, public health, and environment. By increasing grant amounts and ensuring funding availability, HB 879 empowers residents to be part of the solution while reducing the financial burden on families and advancing the state's efforts to combat cesspool pollution. We urge your strong support for this critical legislation.

Mahalo you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Lynn Miyahira
Public Access to SunScreens (PASS) Coalition



Date: February 1, 2025

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

Re: HB 879 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 879 HD1, Relating to Cesspools

I am testifying in Support of HB 879 HD1 relating to cesspools on behalf of the Coral Reef Alliance (CORAL) and a concerned citizen of Moku o Keawe.

HB 879 HD1 will:

Addresses Priority Areas: Ensures grant eligibility is focused on cesspools located in priority level 1 or 2 areas identified by the University of Hawaii's 2022 Cesspool Prioritization Tool, targeting the most environmentally sensitive locations.

Supports Compliance and Oversight: Requires submission of design plans, final construction inspection reports, and receipts from licensed engineers and contractors to ensure proper use of funds and adherence to Department of Health standards.

Restores Lapsed Funding: Appropriates funds for the fiscal years 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 to continue the pilot grant project, which lapsed on June 30, 2024, ensuring continued support for cesspool conversion efforts.

CORAL has been working to remove cesspools across Hawaii for over ten years. We watch as communities like Puako, Kahalu'u, Hana, and Keaukaha, invest millions of dollars and countless hours to identify solutions for these outdated systems, only to be stalled due to lack of available funding and capacity at the State and County levels. Cesspool



upgrades are expensive. We need to try to find ways to make them affordable to homeowners and governments.

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 safeguard marine ecosystems. Our collective expertise allows us to craft impactful strategies to protect Hawaii's waters.

In closing, CORAL Supports HB 879 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

**Testimony of The Nature Conservancy
Supporting HB879 HD1, Relating to Cesspool Conversions.
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 HB879 HD1, which would appropriate funds to and increase the maximum grant amount for the Cesspool Compliance Pilot Grant Project.

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.

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. One of the primary limitations for cesspool upgrade, conversion or connection at scale is the high-cost of conversion property owners, especially those that are low- and moderate-income. HB879 HD1 is one possible avenue to provide valuable financing options.

Mahalo again for the opportunity to provide comments on HB879 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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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 HB879 HD1 - Relating to Cesspool Conversions

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

The Environmental Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawaii strongly supports HB879 HD1, which increases the maximum grant amount for the Cesspool Compliance Pilot Grant Project and appropriates funds for this initiative.

Key Points

- **Increased Grant Amount:** This bill increases the maximum grant amount available for the Cesspool Compliance Pilot Grant Project, making it more accessible for residents to comply with cesspool conversion requirements.
- **Funding Support:** Appropriating funds for this initiative is crucial to its successful implementation and long-term sustainability.
- **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 increase in the maximum grant amount for the Cesspool Compliance Pilot Grant Project 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 increasing the grant amount, this bill aims to make cesspool conversion more affordable and accessible for residents, encouraging greater compliance and ultimately leading to cleaner water and a healthier environment for all.

HB879 HD1 ensures that there is sufficient funding to support the Cesspool Compliance Pilot Grant Project, enabling the Department of Health to effectively manage and expedite the conversion process. This will result in significant improvements in water quality and public health, benefiting 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 HB879 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-879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 12:14:37 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 major impediment to homeowners' conversions of their cesspools is the high cost of doing so. The grant program has a proven record of moving these conversions forward. Successful programs should be continued, especially when badly needed. Please support HB879.

February 18, 2024

Testimony in Support for H.B. 879 HD1 Relating to Cesspool Conversions

Aloha Chair Lowen, Vice Chair Perruso, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing as a homeowner in He'eia with a cesspool to express my strong support for **H.B. 879**, which seeks to increase the maximum grant amount for the Cesspool Compliance Pilot Grant Project and appropriate funds to assist property owners with the costs of cesspool conversion.

As you know, all cesspools in Hawai'i must be upgraded or converted to an approved wastewater system by **2050**. However, the cost of these conversions is a significant financial burden for many homeowners, particularly those in older communities like He'eia. While grant funding exists, it is often **not sufficient** to cover the full cost of conversion, leaving homeowners struggling to comply with state mandates.

In He'eia, protecting our nearshore waters, fishponds, and ecosystems is critical to both the environment and our way of life. Cesspool upgrades are an important step in reducing pollution and ensuring cleaner water for future generations. By increasing funding and grant amounts, this bill will provide essential financial relief and encourage more homeowners to make the necessary conversions.

I urge you to **pass H.B. 879** to support homeowners, protect our environment, and ensure a smoother transition to modern wastewater systems. Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Me ka 'oia'i'o,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cynthia Texeira', written in a cursive style.

Cynthia Texeira

February 18, 2024

Re: 879 HD1 Relating to Cesspool Conversions

Aloha Chair Lowen, Vice Chair Perruso, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Laura Kelley, and I am a kupuna homeowner in He'eia with a cesspool. I am writing in strong support of H.B. 879, which seeks to increase the maximum grant amount for the Cesspool Compliance Pilot Grant Project and provide additional funds to help homeowners cover the costs of cesspool conversion.

As you know, all cesspools in Hawai'i must be upgraded or converted to an approved wastewater system by 2050. However, for many kupuna like myself, the cost of these conversions is overwhelming. While grants are available, they do not always cover the full expense, making it difficult for older homeowners on fixed incomes to comply with the law.

I have lived in He'eia for many decades, and I know how important it is to protect Kāne'ohe Bay, our fishponds, and the local environment. We all want to do our part, but financial assistance is necessary to make these upgrades possible. Increasing funding for this program would help kupuna, working families, and our entire community transition to cleaner, safer wastewater systems.

I urge you to pass H.B. 879 to support homeowners, protect our environment, and help kupuna like me comply with these necessary upgrades. **Mahalo for your time and consideration.**

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "L. Kelley".

Laura A. Kelley

HB-879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 8:32:31 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Peter Sternlicht	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a Hawaii Island resident and one living on Social Security income, financial assistance is critical to my ability to convert my existing cesspool system to a septic system. Your support for this bill is encouraged.

HB-879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 8:49:03 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:

NO DELAY!! DO IT!!!!

HB-879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 9:08:04 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 help make our Island safe and livable for our future generations by voting to clean up our antiquated sewage cesspools.

HB-879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 9:15:01 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 HB879. Please pass this measure to restore lapsed funding of Cesspool Compliance Pilot Grant Project. The project would make cesspool upgrades more affordable.

HB-879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 11:06:26 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:

Increases Financial Assistance: Raises the maximum grant amount for the Cesspool Compliance Pilot Grant Project, making cesspool upgrades more affordable for low- and moderate-income homeowners, including lessees on Hawaiian home lands.

Addresses Priority Areas: Ensures grant eligibility is focused on cesspools located in priority level 1 or 2 areas identified by the University of Hawaii's 2022 Cesspool Prioritization Tool, targeting the most environmentally sensitive locations.

Supports Compliance and Oversight: Requires submission of design plans, final construction inspection reports, and receipts from licensed engineers and contractors to ensure proper use of funds and adherence to Department of Health standards.

Restores Lapsed Funding: Appropriates funds for the fiscal years 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 to continue the pilot grant project, which lapsed on June 30, 2024, ensuring continued support for cesspool conversion efforts.

HB-879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 11:51:36 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-879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 1:07:53 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:

Increases Financial Assistance: Raises the maximum grant amount for the Cesspool Compliance Pilot Grant Project, making cesspool upgrades more affordable for low- and moderate-income homeowners, including lessees on Hawaiian home lands.

Addresses Priority Areas: Ensures grant eligibility is focused on cesspools located in priority level 1 or 2 areas identified by the University of Hawaii's 2022 Cesspool Prioritization Tool, targeting the most environmentally sensitive locations.

Supports Compliance and Oversight: Requires submission of design plans, final construction inspection reports, and receipts from licensed engineers and contractors to ensure proper use of funds and adherence to Department of Health standards.

Restores Lapsed Funding: Appropriates funds for the fiscal years 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 to continue the pilot grant project, which lapsed on June 30, 2024, ensuring continued support for cesspool conversion efforts.

HB-879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 3:07:38 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-879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 4:28:16 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:

My name is Robin Knox and I strongly support HB734 HD!. We absolutely need to make more funding available for cesspool conversion. Cesspool property owners followed the laws at the time and many cannot afford to convert cesspools without help. and convert cesspools we must! My support is based on my expertise as a Qualified Environmental Professional certified in Water Quality Practice by the Global Environmental Health and Safety Credentialing Board. The current discharges from cesspools are an imminent threat to water quality of groundwater, streams, and ocean water and to both environmental and public health. The traditional technologies currently approved by DOH, primarily replacing cesspools with septic tank systems, is not effective in mitigating the untreated sewage discharges from cesspools from either a water quality or logistical feasibility standpoint. Alternative technologies exist, and are being developed everyday, that provide greater degree of waste treatment, are more cost-effective, and requiring less invasive ground disturbing activity than septic tanks. Supporting DOH in vetting alternative technologies is essential to protecting Hawai'i's water quality and reaching the goal of cesspool elimination by 2050. Approving alternative technologies that are more cost effective and logistically feasible will provide greater pollutant reduction and improved water quality in the shortest time frame possible. As an added bonus, embracing new technologies will be a form of economic development for Hawai'i's environmental and engineering businesses and result in exportable expertise that can continue to support our economy long after our cesspools are eliminated.

February 18, 2024

Subject: Testimony in Support of H.B. 879 HD1 Relating to Cesspool Conversions

Aloha Chair Lowen, Vice Chair Perruso, and Members of the Committee,

My name is John Kaleookalani Texeira, and I am a lifelong resident of Kāneʻohe. I am writing in strong support of H.B. 879, which would increase the maximum grant amount for the Cesspool Compliance Pilot Grant Project and provide additional funds to help homeowners with the high cost of cesspool conversion.

Like many in our community, I want to do my part to protect our ʻāina and ocean, but the financial burden of upgrading a cesspool is just too high, especially for families struggling to make ends meet. While grant funding exists, it often does not cover the full cost, leaving homeowners in a difficult position.

For someone like me, who has lived in Kāneʻohe my entire life, this is about more than just compliance. It is about keeping our homes, families, and environment safe. But without additional financial support, many of us simply cannot afford to make these upgrades. Increasing funding for this program would make a huge difference for people who are already facing economic hardship.

I strongly urge you to pass H.B. 879 to help homeowners, protect our environment, and ensure that financial barriers do not prevent people from complying with this law. Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Me ka haʻahaʻa,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Texeira', with a stylized flourish at the end.

John Texeira