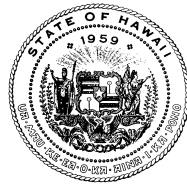


JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII  
KE KIA'ĀINA O KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII



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

STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO  
P. O. BOX 3378  
HONOLULU, HI 96801-3378  
[doh.testimony@doh.hawaii.gov](mailto:doh.testimony@doh.hawaii.gov)

In reply, please refer to:  
File:

**Testimony in SUPPORT of HB0587  
RELATING TO WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT**

REPRESENTATIVE NICOLE E. LOWEN, CHAIR  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION  
REPRESENTATIVE LINDA ICHIYAMA, CHAIR  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WATER & LAND

Hearing Date: 2/2/2023

Room Number: 325

- 1 **Fiscal Implications:** None.
- 2 **Department Testimony:** The Department of Health (Department) strongly supports this
- 3 measure but defers to the counties to address the resource and fiscal implications that would be
- 4 involved with the implementation of this measure.
- 5 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.
- 6 **Offered Amendments:** None.



**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 Committees on Energy & Environmental Protection and Water & Land  
Thursday, February 2, 2023 at 8:30 a.m.

By

Darren T. Lerner, PhD

Director, University of Hawai'i (UH) Sea Grant College Program,  
School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology

And

Thomas Giambelluca

Director, UH Water Resources Research Center

And

Michael Bruno, Provost

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

#### HB 587 – RELATING TO WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT

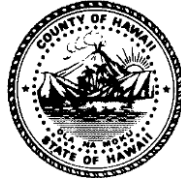
Chairs Lowen and Ichiyama, Vice Chairs Cochran and Poepoe, and Members of the Committees:

The University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program (Hawai'i Sea Grant) and UH Water Resources Research Center support HB 587. Hawai'i's counties all struggle with diverse wastewater treatment challenges as exemplified by repeated sewage spills into Hilo Bay, extreme costs for wastewater infrastructure upgrades in Honolulu, and the recent ruling in the U.S. Supreme court putting Maui County's Lahaina wastewater treatment plant discharge into non-compliance with EPA regulations. These diverse challenges need to be understood and addressed at a state level. This bill would require each county to submit to the Legislature a comprehensive integrated wastewater management plan report that addresses and identifies the county's wastewater management needs, including financial needs. This step would promote improvement and standardization of wastewater management and would help the state meet its mandate to protect environmental resources and human health.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

**Mitchell D. Roth**  
*Mayor*

**Lee Lord**  
*Managing Director*



**Ramzi I. Mansour**  
*Director*

**Brenda Iokepa-Moses**  
*Deputy Director*

# County of Hawai'i

## DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

345 Kekūanāo'a Street, Suite 41 · Hilo, Hawai'i 96720 · cohdem@hawaiiicounty.gov

Ph: (808) 961-8083 · Fax: (808) 961-8086

February 1, 2023

Nicole E. Lowen, Chair, and  
Members of the Committee on Energy and Environmental Protection

Linda Ichiyama, Chair, and  
Members of the Committee on Water and Land

Chair Lowen, Chair Ichiyama, and Committee Members,

I am a member of the Cesspool Conversion Working Group. The Department of Environmental Management supports this bill. HB 587 codifies Priority E1 of the working group's recommendations into statute.

**E1.** Require each County to develop a comprehensive integrated wastewater management plan to include where connections to centralized (public and private) treatment systems are planned, where individual treatment systems will continue to be needed, and where smaller-scale "cluster" treatment systems might be utilized. Include financial strategies.

The County of Hawai'i is currently developing a series of regional wastewater management plans as a precursor to an islandwide comprehensive wastewater management plan. It is unfortunate that such a plan had not been developed in previous decades, and the result is a lack of public wastewater infrastructure, a limited collection system, and a proliferation of cesspools and septic tanks inside and outside of the current service area.

Development of a master plan will inform residents whether they can expect to connect to a public or private treatment system, whether they will be part of a smaller-scale cluster treatment system, or whether they will need to upgrade their cesspools to a DOH-approved wastewater treatment system.

The timeline to accomplish this prior to the start of the 2024 session may be restrictive, however.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Ramzi Mansour, Director  
Department of Environmental Management  
County of Hawai'i



Environmental Caucus of  
The Democratic Party of Hawai'i

To: The Honorable Nicole E. Lowen, Chair  
The Honorable Elle Cochran, Vice Chair  
Committee on Energy & Environmental Protection

The Honorable Linda Ichiyama, Chair  
The Honorable Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair  
Committee on Water & Land

Re: **HB 587 – RELATING TO WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT**

Hearing: Thursday, February 2, 2023, 8:30 a.m., Conference Room 325 & Videoconference

Position: **Strong support**

Aloha, Chairs Lowen and Ichiyama, Vice Chairs Cochran and Poepoe, and Members of the Committee on Energy & Environmental Protection and Committee on Water & Land:

The Environmental Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i stands in strong support of HB 587. This measure requires each county to submit to the Legislature a comprehensive integrated wastewater management plan report that addresses and identifies the county's wastewater management needs, including financial needs.

The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Platform on the environment provides that its members are to "protect and preserve Hawai'i's environment and achieve energy sustainability, advance measures to re-establish a healthy climate and environment for humans and fellow species, including actions to urgently address climate change, and work towards 100% renewable energy goals.

We believe that all people have the right to live in a clean, healthy and safe environment. We believe that the preservation of our natural environment and its ecological well-being is essential to ensuring a safe, healthy, bountiful life for future generations in Hawai'i. We support policies that create a more sustainable society. We support the restoration, preservation, and protection of native ecosystems.

We believe in the resource management principles outlined in the Public Trust doctrine of [Article XI, Section 1 of] the Hawai'i State Constitution." [OUR PLATFORM | DPH \(hawaiidemocrats.org\)](https://www.hawaiidemocrats.org)

Requiring each county to submit to the Legislature a comprehensive integrated wastewater management plan report that addresses and identifies the county's wastewater management needs, including financial needs is consistent with the state and counties' duties under the Public Trust Doctrine and the DPH Platform environmental plank on restoring, preserving, and protecting our native ecosystem.

Please support and pass this bill.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

/s/ Melodie Aduja and Alan Burdick  
Co-Chairs, Environmental Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i



To: The Honorable Chairs Nicole Lowen and Linda Ichiyama, the Honorable Vice Chairs Elle Cochran and Mahina Poepoe, and Members of the Committees on Energy and Environmental Protection and Water and Land.

From: Hawaii Reef and Ocean Coalition (by Ted Bohlen)

Re: **Hearing HB587 RELATING TO WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT.**

Hearing: Thursday February 2, 2023, 8:30 a.m., room 325

Aloha Chairs Lowen and Ichiyama, Vice Chairs Cochran and Poepoe, and Members of the Committees on Energy and Environmental Protection and 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 HB587!**

This bill would require that each county submit to the Legislature a comprehensive integrated wastewater management plan report that addresses and identifies the county's wastewater management needs, including financial needs.

It is important, in protecting Hawaii's environment and public health from wastewater pollution and sewage, that the counties have comprehensive integrated wastewater management plans and adequate funding. Each county has different wastewater management needs, including financial needs. This bill would help the Legislature in the future ensure that all of the counties can meet their wastewater management obligations.

Please pass this bill!

Mahalo!

Hawaii Reef and Ocean Coalition (by Ted Bohlen)

---

February 2, 2023

**The Honorable Nicole E. Lowen, Chair**

House Committee on Energy & Environmental Protection

**The Honorable Linda Ichiyama, Chair**

House Committee on Water & Land

State Capitol, Conference Room 325 & Videoconference

**RE: House Bill 587, Relating to Cesspools**

**HEARING: Thursday, February 2, 2023, at 8:30 a.m.**

Aloha Chair Lowen, Chair Ichiyama, and Members of the Joint Committees:

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 Hawai'i and its over 11,000 members. HAR **strongly supports** House Bill 587, which requires each county to submit to the Legislature a comprehensive integrated wastewater management plan report that addresses and identifies the county's wastewater management needs, including financial needs.

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 priorities<sup>1</sup> across the State (48,596 on Hawai'i Island; 14,300 on Kauai; 11,038 on Maui; 1,400 on Molokai; and 7,491 on O'ahu) with only 27 years to meet the state's mandate to convert all cesspools to a Director of Health approved wastewater system. To convert 83,000 cesspools by 2050, at least 3,000 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.

Affordability and financial planning are key. The Cesspool Conversion Working Group conducted an affordability analysis<sup>2</sup> for homeowners. Based on the analysis, 97% of homeowners would be financially burdened by cesspool conversion costs. Equally concerning, even with a \$10,000 rebate 82% of homeowners would still be financially burdened. Most homeowners will not be able to afford to do this alone.

Undertaking such a massive infrastructure project will require proper planning across various stakeholders and government institutions, including state and local

---

<sup>1</sup> University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program. *Hawai'i Cesspool Prioritization Tool*.

<https://seagrant.soest.hawaii.edu/cesspools-tool/>

<sup>2</sup> Cesspool Conversion Working Group. (2022). *Final Report to the 2023 Regular Session Legislature*. State of Hawai'i Department of Health. <https://health.hawaii.gov/opppd/files/2022/12/Act-170-SLH-2019-Nov-2022.pdf>



 808-733-7060

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

 808-737-4977

---

governments. This bill is an important next step so that we may be able to determine which areas sewer can be built out or where other conversion options are possible as well as to identify funding mechanisms and develop financing strategies to assist with cesspool conversions.

We applaud the state's effort in taking the lead and requiring the counties to develop a comprehensive integrated wastewater management plan and financial strategy to help meet the goal of converting 83,000 cesspools by 2050.

For the foregoing reasons, Hawai'i REALTORS® strongly supports this measure. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.







Feb. 1, 2023

In Support of **HB587** Relating to Wastewater Management  
House Committees on Energy & Environmental Protection (EEP) and Water & Land (WAL)  
Hearing on Feb. 2, 8:30am, Rm. 325

Aloha, Chairs Lowen & Ichiyama, Vice-Chairs Cochran & Poepoe and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the non-profit WAI: Wastewater Alternatives & Innovations, I am writing in **support of HB587**. This bill will require each county to submit to the Legislature a comprehensive, integrated wastewater management plan / report that addresses the county's wastewater management and financial needs. This will also clarify and confirm where there might be possible sewer extensions in the near future so homeowners with cesspools can know whether they will need to hook up to sewer or convert to a DOH-approved Individual Wastewater System (IWS).

Hawaii has more than 83,000 cesspools across the state, discharging 52 million gallons of raw sewage each day into Hawaii's waters. That's similar to a massive sewage spill every day! The people of Hawaii need this law to make sure their wastewater systems aren't polluting the groundwater or nearby surface waters. As a member of the State's Cesspool Conversion Working Group over the last four years, we believe the counties need to come up with clear and comprehensive wastewater management plans that offer guidance to county, state and federal agencies, as well as homeowners, wastewater engineers and contractors.

WAI is dedicated to protecting our drinking water, groundwater and near-shore ecosystems by reducing sewage pollution from cesspools and failing septic systems. Our goal is to help find more innovative, affordable, and eco-friendly solutions to wastewater management. Better sanitation systems reduce sewage pollution and make properties more valuable, while also protecting our groundwater, streams and the health of our coral reefs and coastal areas.

Hawaii is struggling with serious sewage pollution problems, and the state has a mandate to make sure all cesspools are converted in the next three decades. To do that, the counties will need to work more closely with the state legislature to outline plans for exactly where future sewer lines will be constructed and to help come up with a financial plan to help homeowners with the costs of conversion. By completing their wastewater management plans, which are already in progress, the counties will be able to come up with ways to access county, state and federal funding to help homeowners with the financial burdens of converting their cesspools. Mahalo for your leadership on this issue and support of this bill.

Aloha,

*Stuart Coleman*

Stuart H. Coleman, Executive Director

**HB-587**

Submitted on: 1/31/2023 12:06:45 PM

Testimony for EEP on 2/2/2023 8:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Gladys C Baisa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments: Support.

**HB-587**

Submitted on: 1/31/2023 8:48:08 PM

Testimony for EEP on 2/2/2023 8:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Will Caron	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

There are approximately 83,000 cesspools across the state, with 48,596 on Hawai‘i Island, 14,300 on Kaua‘i, 11,038 on Maui, 7,491 on O‘ahu, and 1,400 on Molokai. Act 125, Session Laws of Hawai‘i 2017, requires every cesspool in the state, excluding cesspools granted exemptions by the director of health, to be upgraded or converted to a director-approved wastewater system or connected to a sewerage system by January 1, 2050.

A massive infrastructure project, such as converting 83,000 cesspools by 2050, requires proper planning and administration across various stakeholders and governmental institutions, including those of the counties. Many properties in rural areas, especially those outside Honolulu County, may not be in areas where existing county infrastructure allows for easy conversion and connection to sewer systems. Therefore, requiring each county to identify its respective infrastructure requirements is an important first step towards fulfilling the state's mandate to successfully upgrade or convert all cesspools in the state by 2050. Please support HB587.

**HB-587**

Submitted on: 1/31/2023 9:54:55 PM

Testimony for EEP on 2/2/2023 8:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Theresa M Thompson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB587.

Theresa Thompson

**HB-587**

Submitted on: 2/1/2023 9:26:05 AM

Testimony for EEP on 2/2/2023 8:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Nicolas Storie	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, Chairs Lowen & Ichiyama, Vice-Chairs Cochran & Poepoe and Members of the Committee:

I am a resident of Kaimuki and am writing in support of HB587. This bill will require each county to submit to the Legislature a comprehensive, integrated wastewater management plan / report that addresses the county's wastewater management and financial needs. This will also clarify and confirm where there might be possible sewer extensions in the near future so homeowners with cesspools can know whether they will need to hook up to sewer or convert to a DOH-approved Individual Wastewater System (IWS).

As a Ph.D. student at UH-Mānoa, my central research focus is understanding the sources of coastal sewage pollution across the state. With over 83,000 cesspools across the state leaking 52 million gallons of untreated sewage each day, we face a direct risk to the health of our communities, economy, and coral reefs.

By completing their wastewater management plans, which are already in progress, the counties will be able to come up with ways to access county, state and federal funding to help homeowners with the financial burdens of converting their cesspools. Mahalo for your leadership on this issue and support of this bill.

Best,

Nicolas Storie

**HB-587**

Submitted on: 2/1/2023 11:23:19 AM

Testimony for EEP on 2/2/2023 8:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Graeme Lander	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

As an ocean user, surfer, and freediver, I have seen the negative effects of untreated wastewater on our environment and public health. The presence of cesspools in our community has led to declining water quality, harm to marine life, and increased health risks for those who use the ocean.

That is why I strongly support the requirement for each county to submit a comprehensive integrated wastewater management plan report to the Legislature. This report will provide a comprehensive overview of the county's wastewater management needs, including financial requirements, and will serve as a roadmap for addressing these needs effectively.

By requiring each county to submit this report, we can ensure that the necessary steps are taken to mitigate the negative impacts of cesspools on our environment and public health. This requirement aligns with the expert panel recommendations outlined by the cesspool conversion working group and is a critical step towards a safer and healthier future for all.

I urge you to support this proposal and take action to protect our environment and public health.

Mahalo,

Graeme Lander