HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
THIRTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE, 2023
STATE OF HAWAII

H.R. NO. 139 H.D. 1

HOUSE RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII WATER RESOURCES RESEARCH CENTER TO CONDUCT A FEASIBILITY STUDY ON NEW TECHNOLOGIES RELATED TO CESSPOOL WATER REMEDIATION, WHICH MAY INCLUDE ORGANIC BIODEGRADABLE WATER CLARIFIERS.

WHEREAS, there are approximately eighty-eight thousand cesspools across the State, with nearly fifty thousand on Hawaii island, almost fourteen thousand on Kauai, over twelve thousand on Maui, over eleven thousand on Oahu, and over one thousand four hundred on Molokai; and

WHEREAS, cesspools are contaminating the State's ground water, streams, drinking water, and coastal ecosystems, and the State is obligated to protect, control, and regulate the use of the State's water resources under article XI, section 7, of the Hawaii State Constitution; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Act 125, Session Laws of Hawaii 2017 (Act 125), every cesspool in the State, excluding cesspools granted exemptions by the Director of Health, must be upgraded or converted to an approved wastewater system or connected to a sewerage system by January 1, 2050; and

WHEREAS, Act 125 further directed the Department of Health to investigate the number, scope, and location of cesspools that required upgrade, conversion, or connection based on their impact on public health; and

WHEREAS, Act 132, Session Laws of Hawaii 2018, established the Cesspool Conversion Working Group to develop a long-range, comprehensive plan for conversion of cesspools statewide by 2050 and commissioned a statewide study of sewage contamination in nearshore marine areas to further supplement studies and reports conducted by the Department of Health on cesspools; and

WHEREAS, the Cesspool Conversion Working Group's 2021 Hawaii cesspool hazard assessment and prioritization tool report identified the following cesspool conversion priority categories:

(1) Priority 1, which has significant risk of human health impacts, drinking water impacts, or draining to sensitive waters;

(2) Priority 2, which has a potential impact to drinking water;

(3) Priority 3, which has potential impacts on sensitive waters; and

(4) Priority 4, which impacts have not been identified; and

WHEREAS, while most of the cesspools in the State are categorized as priority 3, a large number of cesspools are categorized as priority 1 or 2, posing great health risks for many residents; and

WHEREAS, there are approximately eighty-two thousand cesspools that will be required to be upgraded or converted to an approved wastewater system or connected to a sewer system by 2050; and

WHEREAS, on an annual basis, approximately one thousand individual wastewater system applications are processed and reviewed; and

WHEREAS, new wastewater management solutions could greatly improve public health and save public funds, and technologies that are reaching commercial scale for the first time include solutions for individual homes, as well as multi-unit dwellings, apartment buildings, and entire communities; and

WHEREAS, large wastewater management systems can remove sewage from multi-unit dwellings and apartment buildings, and at the municipal scale, these technologies can effectively treat

sewage from entire communities for a small fraction of the cost of existing technology now employed in Hawaii; and

WHEREAS, new technologies exist that can be used in homes that do not have the capacity to connect to the existing sewer infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, one such technology is the use of an organic, biodegradable water clarifier; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the Thirty-second Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2023, that the University of Hawaii Water Resources Research Center is requested to conduct a feasibility study on new technologies related to cesspool water remediation, which may include organic biodegradable water clarifiers; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the University of Hawaii Water Resources Research Center is requested to submit a report of its findings and recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the Legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of the Regular Session of 2024; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a certified copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the Director of the University of Hawaii Water Resources Research Center.