
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO CESSPOOLS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 PART I

2 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the health of
3 Hawaii's people and quality of Hawaii's waters are being harmed
4 by pollution from cesspools. Hawaii has more than eighty
5 thousand cesspools that discharge about fifty million gallons of
6 wastewater into the State's groundwater every day. Cesspools
7 are antiquated, substandard systems that damage public health;
8 pollute drinking water; and lower water quality in streams,
9 ground waters, nearshore marine areas, and the ocean. Cesspool
10 pollution also harms public recreation and the precious coral
11 reefs on which Hawaii's economy, shoreline, fisheries, and
12 native species depend.

13 The purpose of this Act is to:

- 14 (1) Allow certain extensions of the deadline for cesspool
15 conversions; and
16 (2) Authorize and appropriate funds to the department of
17 health to retain qualified consultants as necessary to



1 identify necessary public outreach and education
2 resources and tools and develop a comprehensive public
3 outreach strategy and website to serve as a statewide
4 clearinghouse for information and resources for
5 homeowners and wastewater industry professionals
6 related to cesspool upgrade, conversion, and
7 connection.

8 PART II

9 SECTION 2. Section 342D-72, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
10 amended to read as follows:

11 **"§342D-72 Cesspools; mandatory upgrade, conversion, or**
12 **connection.** (a) Before January 1, 2050, every cesspool in the
13 State, excluding cesspools granted exemptions by the director of
14 health pursuant to subsection (b), shall be:

15 (1) Upgraded or converted to a director-approved
16 wastewater system; or

17 (2) Connected to a sewerage system.

18 (b) The director of health may grant exemptions from the
19 requirements of subsection (a) to property owners of cesspools
20 that apply for an exemption and present documentation showing a
21 legitimate reason that makes it infeasible to upgrade, convert,



1 or connect the cesspools. For the purposes of this subsection,
2 a legitimate reason shall include but not be limited to:

3 (1) Small lot size;

4 (2) Steep topography;

5 (3) Poor soils[~~;~~or]

6 (4) Accessibility issues[~~;~~]; or

7 (5) A planned development of sewerage upgrades to an area.

8 (c) The department may grant extensions of up to five
9 years at a time of the deadline under subsection (a) based on a
10 demonstration of financial inability to pay for or finance a
11 cesspool upgrade, conversion, or connection; provided that the
12 department of health may adopt rules pursuant to chapter 91
13 necessary to effectuate the purposes of this subsection.

14 (d) Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, no penalty or
15 other assessment for any violation of this section shall
16 constitute a lien on the real property. Notwithstanding any law
17 to the contrary, no seizure of real property shall be authorized
18 for any violation of this section.

19 ~~[(e)]~~ (e) As used in this section, "cesspool" means an
20 individual wastewater system consisting of an excavation in the
21 ground whose depth is greater than its widest surface dimension,



1 that receives untreated wastewater, and retains or is designed
2 to retain the organic matter and solids discharged into it, but
3 permits the liquid to seep through its bottom or sides to gain
4 access to the underground geographic formation."

5 PART III

6 SECTION 3. Section 342D-59, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
7 amended to read as follows:

8 "[+]§342D-59[+] **Research, educational, and training**
9 **programs.** The director may:

- 10 (1) Conduct and supervise research programs for the
11 purpose of determining the causes, effects, and
12 hazards of water pollution, the quality of the
13 receiving water and the means to monitor the quality
14 of water, or to effect the proper disposal of sewage,
15 drainage, and waste;
- 16 (2) With the approval of the governor, cooperate with, and
17 receive money from the federal government, or any
18 political subdivision of the State or from private
19 sources for the study and control of water pollution;
20 [and]



1 (3) Conduct and supervise state educational and training
2 programs on water pollution prevention, control, and
3 abatement, including the preparation and distribution
4 of information relating to water pollution[+]; and

5 (4) In consultation with counties, nonprofit
6 organizations, and wastewater industry professionals:

7 (A) Identify necessary resources and tools for public
8 outreach and education, including necessary
9 funding and timelines, to meet the requirements
10 of section 342D-72;

11 (B) Develop a comprehensive public outreach strategy
12 for the State and counties to educate homeowners
13 on cesspool upgrade, conversion, and connection
14 options and resources; and

15 (C) Develop a website to serve as a statewide
16 clearinghouse for information and resources for
17 homeowners and wastewater industry professionals
18 about resources, priority level maps, cesspool
19 impacts, financing options, exemptions, county
20 plans, and any other relevant information."



1 SECTION 4. Notwithstanding section 342D-83, Hawaii Revised
2 Statutes, or any other law to the contrary, there is
3 appropriated out of the water pollution control revolving fund
4 the sum of \$ or so much thereof as may be necessary
5 for fiscal year 2026-2027 for the department of health to retain
6 qualified consultants, as necessary, to identify necessary
7 public outreach and education resources and tools, and develop a
8 comprehensive public outreach strategy and website to provide
9 necessary information to homeowners and wastewater industry
10 professionals about information and resources regarding the
11 State's cesspool upgrade, conversion, and connection
12 requirements and deadlines.

13 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
14 health for the purposes of this Act.

15 PART IV

16 SECTION 5. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed
17 and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.

18 SECTION 6. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.

19
INTRODUCED BY:

Wade E. Lowe

JAN 23 2026



H.B. NO. 1985

Report Title:

Cesspools; Mandatory Upgrade, Conversion, or Connection;
Extensions; Public Outreach and Education; Appropriation

Description:

PART II: Allows certain extensions of the deadline for cesspool conversions. PART III: Authorizes and appropriates funds to the Department of Health to retain qualified consultants as necessary to identify necessary public outreach and education resources and tools and develop a comprehensive public outreach strategy and website to educate homeowners and wastewater industry professionals about information and resources regarding the State's cesspool upgrade, conversion, and connection requirements and deadlines.

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