

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

**Testimony COMMENTING on HB1730 HD2
RELATING TO WASTEWATER SYSTEMS.**

SENATOR MIKE GABBARD, CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

SENATOR JOY A. SAN BUENAVENTURA, CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Hearing Date, Time and Room Number: 03/23/2026, 1:30 pm, 225

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 Governor’s executive budget request.

4 **Department Position:** The Department offers comments and proposed amendments.

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

7 The Department supports the intent of this bill to convene a Cesspool Conversion
8 Implementation Working Group on rules and practices for cesspools and wastewater systems,
9 require the Department to propose changes to Hawai‘i Administrative Rules, Title 11, Chapter
10 62 (HAR 11-62) to make wastewater systems and cesspool upgrades and conversions more
11 affordable without compromising water quality, and establish positions in the Department to
12 focus on cesspool conversions and related activities.

13 The Department understands the importance and urgency of addressing cesspool
14 conversion and the intertwined issues regarding individual wastewater systems (IWS).

1 According to Department records, 408 cesspools were converted in 2025 and 435 were
2 upgraded in 2024.

3 The Department is currently drafting updates to HAR 11-62 to make significant revisions
4 to better support IWS approval while continuing to protect public health and the environment.
5 These updates will primarily focus on IWS design requirements and approval processes, with
6 the goal of improving regulatory clarity and alignment with current best practices.

7 The Department has convened an informal Cesspool Conversion Implementation
8 Working Group to solicit wastewater stakeholder and community input on the HAR 11-62
9 revisions and to continue the work of the Cesspool Conversion Working Group established by
10 Act 132, Session Laws of Hawai'i 2018. The informal Cesspool Conversion Implementation
11 Working Group has begun to provide input on proposed revisions to HAR 11-62.

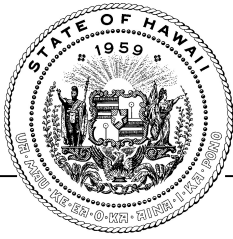
12 SECTION 2(a) provides the description of the Cesspool Conversion Implementation
13 Working Group membership, however SECTION 2(a)(6) through SECTION 2(a)(13) does not
14 specify a quantity of members with the defined backgrounds. The Department requests
15 clarification on whether the Director has discretion to determine the maximum number of
16 invitations for Cesspool Conversion Implementation Working Group membership.

17 In addition, the Department is in the planning stages of proposing to expand the
18 Wastewater Branch to create a dedicated Cesspool Management Section and Quality and
19 Planning Support Staff unit. Adding these separate functions would create positions solely
20 dedicated to planning, organizing, and coordinating activities to close cesspools statewide,
21 including coordinating related policies and systems and assessing new technology. Additional
22 positions would also focus on program development, quality assurance, grant and contract
23 management, rulemaking, public outreach, and education, which would allow the Department
24 to provide additional resources to the public and improve customer experience as cesspool
25 conversion applications increase.

1 House Standing Committee Report 13-26 recommended a \$182,208 appropriation for
2 the establishment of two positions in the Department of Health. The Department was able to
3 update its personnel cost calculations, and respectfully notes that personnel costs are
4 estimated at \$207,216 per year. The Department is currently evaluating the necessity of hiring
5 a consultant to assist the cesspool conversion implementation working group, and estimates
6 consultant costs at \$150,000.

7 **Offered Amendments:** None.

8 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



**STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF PLANNING
& SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR

MARY ALICE EVANS
DIRECTOR

235 South Beretania Street, 6th Floor, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 2359, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96804

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Statement of
MARY ALICE EVANS, Director

before the
**SENATE COMMITTEE ON
AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT &
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

Monday, March 23, 2026, 1:30 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 225

in consideration of
**HB 1730, HD 2
RELATING TO WASTEWATER SYSTEMS.**

Chairs Gabbard and San Buenaventura, Vice Chairs Richards and McKelvey, and Members of the Committees.

The Office of Planning and Sustainable Development (OPSD) **supports HB 1730, HD 2**, which establishes a Cesspool Conversion Implementation Working Group to assist the Department of Health in a review of the Department's administrative rules and practices regarding wastewater systems and cesspools and in the development of proposed changes to make cesspool conversions more affordable. Requires a report to the Legislature. Appropriates funds for positions and hiring of a consultant to assist the Cesspool Conversion Implementation Working Group.

HB 1730, HD 2 addresses the barrier that infrastructure capacity poses to the development of affordable housing. Current regulatory limits on Individual Wastewater Systems (IWS) are largely rooted in data from the 1990s and do not reflect the significant technological advancements in storage and treatment capacity achieved over the last thirty years. By establishing an advisory group to modernize these regulations, we can safely expand IWS limits to accommodate the greater infrastructure capacity and residential density required to meet Hawai'i's urgent housing needs. Furthermore, this measure aligns with the statewide efforts to accelerate cesspool conversions. By making these transitions more affordable and facilitating connections to higher-capacity systems, we create a more resilient infrastructure framework that supports sustainable growth. For these reasons, OPSD respectfully asks the committee to pass this measure.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this measure.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII'
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA
P.O. BOX 621
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

DAWN N.S. CHANG
CHAIRPERSON
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT
RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE
FIRST DEPUTY
CIARA W.K. KAHAHANE
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER
AQUATIC RESOURCES
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT
CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS
CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES
ENFORCEMENT
ENGINEERING
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

Testimony of
RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE
Acting Chairperson

Before the Senate Committees on
AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT
and
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Monday, March 23, 2026
1:30 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 225

In consideration of
HOUSE BILL 1730, HOUSE DRAFT 2
RELATING TO WASTEWATER SYSTEMS

House Bill 1730, House Draft 2 proposes to establish a Cesspool Conversion Implementation Working Group to assist the Department of Health (DOH) in a review of the Department's administrative rules and practices regarding wastewater systems and cesspools and in the development of proposed changes to make cesspool conversions more affordable. It also proposes to require a report to the Legislature and to appropriate funds for positions and hiring of a consultant to assist the Cesspool Conversion Implementation Working Group. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources supports this bill.**

Hawai'i has over 83,000 cesspools that discharge 52 million gallons of untreated sewage into the groundwater every day. Sewage discharge can lead to decreased species diversity, increased nutrients leading to eutrophication, and reduction in coral cover. These effects on reefs are frequent, as sewage has been shown to travel quickly from land to sea. Thus, it is imperative to focus on effective management of wastewater to protect aquatic resources in Hawai'i. As it stands, DOH does not have adequate funding or capacity to carry out the number of cesspool conversions required to meet the goal of total cesspool conversions in the state by 2050, so this measure is important to provide DOH with those resources. In order to adequately protect aquatic resources from sewage pollution, this support for DOH is essential.

Mahalo for the opportunity to comment on this measure.



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'olelo

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment
and
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
March 23, 2026 at 1:30 p.m.

By

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

Tao Yan

Director, Water Resources Research Center,
Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering
and

Vassilis Syrmos, PhD

Provost

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

HB 1730 HD2 – RELATING TO WASTEWATER SYSTEMS

Chairs Gabbard and San Buenaventura, Vice Chairs Richards and McKelvey, and Members of the Committees:

The University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program (Hawai'i Sea Grant) supports HB 1730 HD2.

The upgrading of cesspools is a vital step towards mitigating the potential risks associated with groundwater contamination, as the adoption of advanced wastewater treatment methods reinforces Hawaii's dedication to protecting its valuable water resources and minimizing ecological impact. HB 1730 HD2 assists in these efforts by establishing a Cesspool Conversion Implementation Working Group, which will further the work accomplished by the state's Cesspool Conversion Working Group, reported out in 2022. Enhancing the capacity within the Department of Health through appropriated funds to hire additional support in administering cesspool conversions and reviewing existing and new administrative rules is an important step towards meeting the State's cesspool conversion goals. The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa is ready and willing to provide the required expertise as stipulated in Section 2a of the bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



To: The Honorable Chairs Mike Gabbard and Joy San Buenaventura, the Honorable Vice Chairs Herbert M. “Tim” Richards, III, and Angus McKelvey, and members of the Committees on Agriculture and Environment and Health and Human Services

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

Re: **Hearing HB1730 HD2 RELATING TO WASTEWATER SYSTEMS**

Hearing: Monday March 23, 2026 1:30 p.m.

Aloha Chairs Gabbard and San Buenaventura, Vice Chairs Richards and McKelvey, and members of the Committees on Agriculture and Environment and Health and Human Services!

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 HB1730 HD2!**

Wastewater from cesspools is the largest water pollution problem in Hawai'i. There are over 80,000 cesspools that are dumping over 50 million gallons every day into Hawaii's groundwater, drinking waters, streams, and ocean. This pollution is making people sick with diseases such as gastroenteritis, skin rashes, eye irritations, and in some cases much more serious illnesses. Cesspool pollution is harming the coral reefs that protect our very way of life here in Hawai'i —our recreation-based economy serving locals and visitors, our fisheries and our shorelines.

The Legislature has recognized this urgent problem. By law (the mandate of section 342D-72, Hawaii Revised Statutes, all 80,000 plus cesspools must be upgraded to a system approved by the Department of Health by 2050. Additional action is needed now to protect

Hawai'i's public health and environment! We must not "kick the cesspool can down the road" any longer!

Unfortunately, cesspool upgrades can be very costly! We need to find ways to **make cesspool upgrades more affordable for homeowners without compromising water quality!**

Overseeing the upgrading of thousands of cesspools affordably is a huge task! The Department of Health will in the coming years need additional staff for planning, comprehensive public education, and facilitating compliance and administration of thousands of cesspool upgrade grants, loans, and other financing. The Department will need to partner with the federal government and the counties, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and community organizations to carry out its responsibilities.

I served as the Deputy Attorney General representing the Department of Health's Wastewater Branch from 2006 through 2020; I know its responsibilities and capacities very well. It is my opinion that, despite hard-working staff, **the existing DOH Wastewater Branch cannot take on these major additional tasks without expert technical assistance, implementation advice, planning, and staff. As the Department itself has noted in testimony, it needs to create a dedicated Cesspool Management Section and Quality and Planning Support Staff unit, solely dedicated to planning, organizing, and coordinating activities to close cesspools statewide and assessing new technology.**

The Department needs expert technical advice on how to facilitate new technologies for individual wastewater systems and decentralized cluster sewers. The department also needs advice on how best to revise its administrative rules and practices to **make cesspool upgrades more affordable without compromising water quality.**

This bill would provide the Department with additional expert advice and begin to provide needed additional personnel who are dedicated to facilitating the conversion of cesspools within the State.

Please pass this bill to protect public health and the environment by providing resources and advice to help the Department manage the huge cesspool upgrade effort!

Mahalo!

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



March 20, 2026

Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment; Health and Human Services
Hawai'i State Legislature
Via Electronic Transmission

Re: Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 1730, Relating to Wastewater Systems
Hearing: Monday, March 23rd, 1:30pm via Videoconferencing

Aloha Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards and members of the Committee on Agriculture and Environment; and Chair Beunaventura, Vice Chair McKelvey and members of the Committee on Health and Human Services,

On behalf of the non-profit WAI: Wastewater Alternatives & Innovations (WAI) I am writing in **strong support** of HB1730.

WAI is an environmental non-profit dedicated to protecting our water resources by reducing sewage pollution from cesspools. Hawaii has more than 83,000 cesspools across the state, discharging 52 million gallons of raw sewage each day into Hawaii's waters, contributing to groundwater contamination, harmful bacteria exposure, nutrient pollution, and coral reef degradation. WAI supports more innovative, affordable, and eco-friendly solutions to wastewater management.

Cesspool conversions can be costly, and we need to try to find ways to make upgrades more **affordable**. HB1730 establishes a Cesspool Conversion Implementation Working Group to advise the Department of Health on cesspool and wastewater system rules and practices, and requires DOH to update administrative rules to make upgrades and conversions more affordable without compromising water quality. This bill also strengthens DOH's staffing capacity, which is necessary to address delays, and speed up the rate of cesspool conversions needed to meet the State's mandate to convert all cesspools by 2050 under Act 125 (2017).

As a member of the State's Cesspool Conversion Working Group for four years (2018-2022), WAI identified the creation of a new Cesspool Section within DOH as one of the highest priorities in our Final Report, and the staffing positions funded by this bill are an important step in that direction.

WAI respectfully submits testimony in strong support of HB1730 and appreciates the Legislature's continued leadership on addressing Hawai'i's wastewater pollution challenges. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of this bill on behalf of Wastewater Alternatives & Innovations, and mahalo for your leadership on this important issue.

Aloha,

Stuart Coleman,

Jessica Kai Paisley,

Stuart H. Coleman, Executive Director

Jessica Kai Paisley, Program & Legal Specialist

HAWAI'I OCEAN LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE



March 23, 2026

Hawai'i State Legislature
Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

Re: Testimony in SUPPORT for HB1730, HD2, Relating to Wastewater Systems

Aloha Chairs Gabbard and San Buenaventura, Vice Chairs Richards and McKelvey, and esteemed members of the committees,

The Ocean Legislative Task Force—a coalition of more than 150 individuals across over 20 organizations statewide—strongly supports HB1730, HD1, which establishes a Cesspool Conversion Implementation Working Group to assist the Department of Health in reviewing and updating administrative rules and practices regarding wastewater systems and cesspools. The bill's focus on making cesspool conversions more affordable directly addresses a critical environmental and public health challenge in Hawai'i, where over 83,000 cesspools discharge an estimated 53 million gallons of untreated sewage into the ground each day. This pollution threatens drinking water sources, coastal ecosystems, and public health, contributing to beach closures and coral reef degradation.

By convening working group, HB1730 HD2 ensures that the Department of Health will benefit from the technical expertise and stakeholder input necessary to modernize its regulatory approach. The inclusion of funding for additional staff and a consultant is essential for the group to conduct a thorough review, analyze best practices, and develop actionable, cost-effective recommendations. This investment is expected to yield significant long-term savings by reducing the environmental remediation costs associated with contaminated groundwater and nearshore waters.

Affordability is a major barrier to cesspool conversion for many property owners. The bill's mandate to specifically address cost-reduction strategies is timely and pragmatic, as recent estimates suggest that the average cesspool conversion can cost between \$20,000 and \$30,000 per household. By targeting regulatory and administrative inefficiencies, the WTAG can help streamline permitting, encourage innovative technologies, and identify funding mechanisms that lower the financial burden on homeowners.

The Ocean Legislative Task Force believes that HB1730, HD2's collaborative, data-driven approach will accelerate progress toward the state's statutory goal of eliminating all cesspools by 2050. We urge the

legislature to advance this measure and ensure robust implementation to protect Hawai'i's water resources, public health, and coastal economy.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this important measure.

HB-1730-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/20/2026 1:48:59 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/23/2026 1:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lisa Bishop	Testifying for Friends of Hanauma Bay	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairs and Committee Members,

Friends of Hanauma Bay Strongly Supports HB1730.

We urge you to pass this bill.

Mahalo!

**Testimony of The Nature Conservancy
Supporting HB1730 HD2, Relating to Wastewater Systems
Committee on Agriculture and Environment
Committee on Health and Human Services
March 23, 2026 at 1:30 pm
Conference Room 225 and via Videoconference**

Dear Chairs Gabbard and San Buenaventura, Vice Chairs Richards and McKelvey, and Members of the Committee:

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify today. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) Hawai'i and Palmyra supports HB1730 HD2, which establishes a Cesspool Conversion Implementation Working Group to assist the Department of Health (DOH) in a review of the Department's administrative rules and practices regarding wastewater systems and cesspools and in the development of proposed changes to make cesspool conversions more affordable and appropriates funds for positions and hiring of a consultant to assist the Cesspool Conversion Implementation Working Group.

Science conducted by TNC and partners has shown that wastewater, particularly cesspools, are detrimental to the coral reefs that protect our coastlines and underpin our economy. With over 80,000 cesspools across the state, our aquatic ecosystems are being harmed by elevated amounts of organic nitrogen and phosphorus, pathogens, and other contaminants. These contaminants promote excess algal and bacterial growth, coral disease, and 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.

Hawai'i urgently needs a practical path forward to meet the 2050 mandate for cesspool conversion. This bill attempts to map that path by establishing a cesspool conversion implementation working group with broad technical, industry, county, nonprofit, and academic representation to help the DOH identify affordable, effective solutions. Dedicated DOH staff and resources will strengthen the State's capacity to modernize outdated rules, streamline processes, and lower costs while maintaining water quality protections. These steps will help homeowners, counties, and the State make meaningful progress now toward reducing cesspool pollution and safeguarding our waters and communities.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of HB1730 HD2.

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 84,000 acres in 13 nature preserves and 18 managed areas 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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Statement of
Gregory Wong
Co-Founder and Engineer at WaiHome LLC
before the
Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment
& Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Monday, March 23, 2026 | 1:30 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 225 & Videoconference

In consideration of
HB1730 HD2
RELATING TO WASTEWATER SYSTEMS

To: Chair Gabbard, Chair San Buenaventura, and Members of the Committees

WaiHome LLC stands in strong support of HB1730, HD2. As a **Hawaii-based company that has developed excavation-free wastewater solutions**, we believe this bill is a critical step toward meeting our 2050 cesspool conversion mandate while keeping costs manageable for local families.

We support this measure for the following reasons:

- **Focus on Affordability:** We applaud the bill's explicit focus on reducing excavation costs. For many Hawaii homeowners, cesspool upgrades are financially prohibitive because excavation costs make up the majority of traditional conversions. By investigating and approving technologies that minimize ground disturbance, the State can make environmental protection accessible to all residents, not just those who can afford it.
- **Prioritizing Island-Specific Solutions:** We strongly urge the Working Group to prioritize technologies designed specifically for Hawaii's unique environmental constraints. Standard mainland "off-the-shelf" systems are often expensive and fail in our islands due to our highly permeable volcanic soils, high water tables, and limited lot sizes. As a Hawaii-based company, WaiHome has engineered our excavation-free systems to perform in these exact conditions where mainland technologies are often ineffective or prohibitively expensive to install.
- **Modernizing Regulatory Barriers:** The establishment of a Cesspool Conversion Implementation Working Group is vital. Current Department of Health administrative rules often lag behind available technology. I hope this group will provide the technical expertise needed to ensure that innovative, low-impact systems like ours can be permitted and deployed efficiently.
- **Proven Results from State Support:** Four years ago, members of this committee—specifically Chair Gabbard—provided early support for WaiHome's initial federal funding. Today, we are proud to "close the loop" on that investment. Thanks to that support, WaiHome has successfully leveraged over \$2M federal NSF and NOAA grants to develop local technology, hire local staff, and create the excavation-free systems that HB1730 aims to fast-track.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments,



Gregory Wong
Co-founder and Engineer
WaiHome LLC



March 22, 2026

Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Hawai'i State Legislature
Via Electronic Transmission

Re: Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 1730 HD2, Relating to Wastewater Systems
Hearing: Monday, March 23, 2026, 1:30 PM CR 225 & Via Videoconference

To: The Honorable Chair Gabbard, Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Richards, Vice Chair McKelvey and Members of the Committee,

The Surfrider Foundation, Hawai'i region, is in strong support of HB1730 HD2. Without effective mechanisms to facilitate compliance with HRS §342D-72 cesspool conversion mandate by 2050, many homeowners face unnecessary cost, delay, and uncertainty when attempting to upgrade or convert cesspools. HB1730 addresses these barriers by strengthening the Department of Health's capacity to implement the cesspool compliance program through improved coordination, technical guidance, modernization of administrative rules, and dedicated staffing.

Surfrider Foundation is a grassroots activist network dedicated to protecting our oceans, waves, and beaches. Through our Blue Water Task Force (BWTF), a citizen-science water quality monitoring program on Kaua'i, Maui, and O'ahu, we regularly test more than 80 sites statewide for enterococcus, a fecal indicator bacteria. Many of our monitoring sites are located near high concentrations of cesspools, including Kāne'ōhe Bay at Kahalu'u, where water quality frequently exceeds state public health standards. These exceedances represent real risks to residents and visitors alike.

Hawai'i continues to face significant public health and environmental threats from the more than 83,000 cesspools that collectively discharge 52 million gallons of untreated sewage into groundwater and nearshore waters every day. This contamination threatens public health, degrades water quality, fuels harmful algal blooms that damages coral reefs- ecosystems that protect our shorelines, sustain fisheries, and support recreation and local economies. Without stronger implementation capacity and practical, affordable pathways for conversion, the 2050 mandate will remain aspirational rather than achievable.

HB1730 is about operationalizing Hawai'i's cesspool mandate. By determining most affordable solutions, modernizing administrative rules to reflect more cost effective options, and adding targeted personnel, this measure translates policy into much needed progress.

This bill is essential to accelerate cesspool conversions, protect public health, and restore confidence that Hawai'i can meet its clean water commitments.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of HB1730 HD2 on behalf of Surfrider Foundation's three Hawai'i chapters and our members statewide.

Sincerely,

Hanna Lilley
Hawai'i Regional Manager
Surfrider Foundation



Senate Committees on Agriculture & Environment and Health & Human Services

Testimony on HB1730 HD2

Relating to Wastewater Systems

March 23rd, 2026

1:30 PM

Room 225

Testimony of the Hawai'i Climate Change and Health Working Group

**In Support of HB1730 HD2
Relating to Wastewater Systems**

Aloha Aloha Chair Gabbard, Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Richards, Vice Chair McKelvey and Members of the Committees,

The Climate Change and Health Working Group (CCHWG) **supports HB1730 HD2**, which establishes a Cesspool Conversion Implementation Working Group to assist the Department of Health in reviewing administrative rules and practices regarding wastewater systems and cesspools and in developing proposed changes to make cesspool conversions more affordable. The measure also appropriates funds for dedicated Department of Health positions and consultant support to advance implementation.

Who We Are and Why This Matters

CCHWG is a cross-sector collaborative committed to strengthening Hawai'i's public health resiliency in response to climate change. Guided by the principles of equity, justice, and aloha, we work across disciplines and communities to research, communicate, and advocate for

policies that reduce climate-related health risks, particularly for communities that are disproportionately burdened.

Cesspools Threaten Water Quality, Ecosystems, and Public Health

Hawai'i has more than 80,000 cesspools that discharge untreated wastewater into groundwater and nearshore waters each day, harming drinking water supplies, coral reefs, fisheries, and public health¹. Wastewater nutrient pollution contributes to algal blooms that smother coral reefs and degrade coastal ecosystems that protect shoreline communities and support local economies. Climate change, including sea level rise, extreme rainfall events, and increased flooding, heightens the risk of cesspool failure and contamination².

The Burden of Pollution and Compliance Is Not Equal

The burden of compliance and pollution impacts falls disproportionately on rural, coastal, and lower-income communities³. While state law requires cesspool conversion by 2050, current upgrade rates remain far below what is necessary to meet that mandate. By establishing a multidisciplinary working group to review existing administrative rules and identify cost-effective, feasible improvements without compromising water quality, HB1730 HD2 advances a more strategic and equitable pathway forward. Dedicated staffing and expert consultation will strengthen implementation capacity and help accelerate progress statewide.

A Proactive Investment in Climate and Community Health

This measure represents a proactive, preventative investment in Hawai'i's climate resilience and long-term health outcomes. Modernizing rules, improving coordination, and strengthening implementation infrastructure will protect water resources, coral reefs, and community health while reducing avoidable public costs in the future.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of HB1730 HD2.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Kiefer, MD, MPH

The Climate Change and Health Working Group

¹[“Final Report to the 2023 Regular Session Legislature”](#), Cesspool Conversion Working Group, 2022

² [“Cesspools in Paradise”](#), Helene Raine, Sea Grant, University of Hawai'i, 2019

³ [Hawai'i County Cesspool Conversion Task Force Report](#), County of Hawai'i, 2025



TO: Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment
Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair
Senator Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, III, Vice Chair

Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Angus L.K. McKelvey, Vice Chair

FROM: Lynn Miyahira representing Public Access to SunScreens (PASS) Coalition
DATE: Monday, March 23, 2026
TIME: 1:30 PM
PLACE: Conference Room 225 & Videoconference

Re: HB 1730 HD2

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.

Cesspools are a pressing issue in Hawaii that impacts our health, water quality, and coral reefs. With over 83,000 cesspools in the state, discharging about 53 million gallons of raw sewage every day, immediate action is needed to mitigate their negative impact. Untreated wastewater leaking from cesspools into nearshore waters can cause high levels of nitrogen in the water, which leads to algae blooms that suffocate and cover our coral reefs.

By convening a dedicated advisory group, HB1730 ensures that the Department of Health will benefit from the technical expertise and stakeholder input necessary to modernize its regulatory approach. The inclusion of funding for additional staff and a consultant is essential for the group to conduct a thorough review, analyze best practices, and develop actionable, cost-effective recommendations. This investment is expected to yield significant long-term savings by reducing the environmental remediation costs associated with contaminated groundwater and nearshore waters.

Affordability is a major barrier to cesspool conversion for many property owners. The bill's mandate to specifically address cost-reduction strategies is timely and pragmatic, as recent estimates suggest that the average cesspool conversion can cost between \$20,000 and \$30,000 per household. By targeting regulatory and administrative inefficiencies, the WTAG can help streamline permitting, encourage innovative technologies, and identify funding mechanisms that lower the financial burden on homeowners.

HB1730 is needed now as it will accelerate progress toward the state's statutory goal of eliminating all cesspools by 2050. We urge the legislature to advance this measure and ensure robust implementation to protect Hawai'i's water resources, public health, and coastal economy.

Mahalo you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Lynn Miyahira
Public Access to SunScreens (PASS) Coalition

HB-1730-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/20/2026 1:29:35 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/23/2026 1:30:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chairs Gabbard, Richared, Buenaventura, and McKelvey, and Committee Members. I believe that HB1730 is one of the most important bills before you this session. Our state is suffering serious and increasing risks from the raw sewage entering our coastal waters. I am an ocean person, whose life revolves around these nearshore waters. For the past week I have been excluded from my home waters in Kona due to brown water advisories and the risk of serious infection and disease due to sewage runoff. This may continue for additional weeks with the runoff from the current Kona low. The need to convert our cesspools to effective wastewater treatment is imperative and urgent, but septic tanks are neither effective nor affordable. It is vital that the DOH evaluate and approve alternative technologies. HB1730 provides a means to achieve that goal. Without affordable alternatives, residents will continue to resist converting our cesspools. I urge you to pass HB1730 for ourselves, and for our keiki. Mahalo. Douglas Perrine, Kailua Kona

1730 HB
Relating to Wastewater Systems.
Charlotte Bronstein

To the Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Charlotte Bronstein, and I strongly support this bill. I am a junior at Seabury Hall on the island of Maui. This year, I took a class called AP Research, where I decided to study wastewater treatment, specifically the use of constructed wetlands in Hawaii. Through this research, I have learned of the negative impacts of cesspools on human and environmental health, as well as the problems involved with conversion. The numbers are staggering. 88,000 cesspools dump approximately 53 million gallons of sewage per day into the ground in Hawaii. This sewage can seep into our oceans easily due to sheer proximity, causing excess nutrient levels that lead to algal blooms, hypoxic zones, and marine life die-off. Sewage from cesspools leakages can harm people through polluting swimming and drinking waters, especially after heavy rains. Sewage can seep into groundwater, aquifers, and wells. However, cesspool conversion can cost upwards of \$50,000, which is an amount that people are unwilling and unable to pay, especially for a process where they do not directly see the positive impacts. As of 2023, 98% of Maui residents would not be able to afford cesspool conversion. In Upcountry Maui, a Priority 1 cesspool conversion area, I know many of my neighbors and friends who cannot afford to convert their cesspools.

A Cesspool Conversion Implementation Working Group would help the state balance decreasing cost with the environmental benefits that arise from converting cesspools. This is obviously a complicated issue, and having a group of experts to advise rules and policies would help the state make the greatest informed decisions. Currently, Hawaii is not meeting its goals for cesspool conversion by 2050. I would not like to see the deadline pushed back further throughout my lifetime due to affordability and efficiency issues. By establishing a working group, this bill would help the state reach its goals while alleviating strain from homeowners and the environment. I urge the committee to pass 1730 HB to ensure a sustainable future for Hawaii. Thank you for your time.

HB-1730-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/20/2026 10:53:05 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/23/2026 1:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Glen Kagamida	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill as a means to help homeowners. Mahalo!

HB-1730-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/22/2026 6:50:03 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/23/2026 1:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Natalie Graham-Wood	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB 1730, HD2. My name is Natalie Graham-Wood and I live at Sunset Beach, Oahu. My husband and I are retired and on a fixed income. We are in desperate need to find very much less costly alternatives converting the cesspool. Our lot is small, barely over 5,000 square feet.

Please, we need your help.

Mahalo