



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 HB1985 HD1  
RELATING TO CESSPOOLS.**

REPRESENTATIVE CHRIS TODD, CHAIR  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Hearing Date, Time and Room Number: 03/02/2026, 10:00 am, 308

1 **Fiscal Implications:** Undetermined. The Department of Health (“Department”) requests that  
2 this measure be considered as a vehicle to provide this needed funding so long as it does not  
3 supplant the priorities and requests outlined in the Governor’s executive budget request.

4 **Department Position:** The Department supports the intent of this measure and offers  
5 comments and proposed amendments.

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

8 The Department acknowledges the intent of providing an extension of up to five (5)  
9 years at a time of the deadline under Hawai‘i Revised Statutes (HRS) Chapter 342D-72 (c) based  
10 on a demonstration of financial inability to pay for or finance a cesspool upgrade, conversion,  
11 or connection. However, the type of financial document and type of metric to be utilized to  
12 demonstrate a property owner’s financial inability needs further clarification.

13 The Department appreciates the need to create and execute a comprehensive public  
14 outreach strategy on cesspool conversion. The Department would need one (1) full-time  
15 equivalent (FTE) Program Specialist V position with experience in public outreach and  
16 education, website development, and data administration. This one (1) FTE position would  
17 manage creation and execution of the public outreach strategy, the creation of the statewide

1 comprehensive website, oversee updates and data management, and coordinate with the  
2 counties, nonprofit organizations, and wastewater professionals, and other community  
3 stakeholders.

4 **Offered Amendments:** The Department respectfully offers the following revisions to  
5 SECTION 2, Page 4, lines 6-8. We have highlighted text where we are recommending  
6 replacement or addition. All other amendments are unchanged.

7 “(e) It shall be a goal of the department to prioritize the upgrade, conversion, or  
8 connection to a sewerage system of cesspools that pose the highest risk to human health or the  
9 environment.”

10 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on 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 House Committee on  
FINANCE**

**Monday, March 2, 2026  
10:00 AM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 308**

**In consideration of  
HOUSE BILL 1985, HOUSE DRAFT 1  
RELATING TO CESSPOOLS**

House Bill 1985, House Draft 1 proposes to allow certain extensions of the deadline for cesspool conversions; to establish a goal for the Department of Health (DOH) to prioritize the upgrade, conversion, or connection of cesspools that pose the highest risk to human health or the environment; and to authorize and appropriate funds to DOH 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 property owners and wastewater industry professionals about information and resources regarding the State's cesspool upgrade, conversion, and connection requirements and deadlines. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) offers the following comments.**

Hawai'i has over 83,000 cesspools that discharge 52 million gallons of untreated sewage into the groundwater every day. Sewage discharge can adversely impact marine resources by causing increased nutrients in the nearshore environment leading to eutrophication, reduction in coral cover, and decreased marine species diversity. These effects frequently impact coral reef ecosystems, 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.

The current deadline for cesspool conversions is not until 2050, by which time these cesspools will have been continuing to discharge sewage into the groundwater for another 24 years. Any extensions to the deadline will only prolong these adverse impacts. The

Department recognizes the challenges of meeting current cesspool conversion deadlines, and urges the Legislature to provide funding to DOH and homeowners to support these conversions, so that extensions to the deadline are not necessary.

The Department supports the amendments to Section 342D-59, Hawai'i Revised Statutes, that provide the Director of Health with the authority and resources to conduct outreach and education to support homeowner conversion of cesspools.

Mahalo for the opportunity to comment on this measure.



LATE \*Testimony submitted late may not be considered by the Committee for decision making purposes.

**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

Telephone: (808) 587-2846  
Fax: (808) 587-2824  
Web: <https://planning.hawaii.gov/>

Statement of  
**MARY ALICE EVANS, Director**

before the  
**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE**  
Monday, March 2, 2026, 10 AM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 308

in consideration of  
**HB 1985, HD 1**  
**RELATING TO CESSPOOLS.**

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the House Committee on Finance.

The Office of Planning and Sustainable Development (OPSD) **supports HB 1985, HD 1**, which in PART II: allows certain extensions of the deadline for cesspool conversions; and establishes a goal for the Department of Health to prioritize the upgrade, conversion, or connection of cesspools that pose the highest risk to human health or the environment. In 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 property owners and wastewater industry professionals about information and resources regarding the State's cesspool upgrade, conversion, and connection requirements and deadlines.

Furthermore, OPSD highlights that Part III of HB 1985, HD 1 emerged directly from the Individual Wastewater Systems (IWS) Permitted Interaction Group (PIG) of the SPEED Task Force, reflecting the impactful work of the task force and its members on policymaking. This section emphasizes the necessity of robust public outreach and education to inform both homeowners and wastewater industry professionals about available resources and impending deadlines for conversion. Such education is essential to ensure that the public is not caught off-guard by regulatory requirements and that industry professionals are equipped with the latest information to guide their clients. Clear communication is the cornerstone of successful implementation, and this bill provides the necessary framework to bridge the gap between policy mandates and community readiness. For these reasons, OPSD respectfully asks the committee to pass HB 1985, HD 1.

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

  
OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS  
**COMMENTS ON 1985\_HD1**  
RELATING TO CESSPOOLS

House Committee on Finance

Hawai'i State Capitol

March 2, 2026

10:00 A.M.

Room 308

---

Aloha e Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the House Committee on Finance:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **provides COMMENTS ON HB1985\_HD1** which would, among other amendments, extend the deadline for conversion of cesspools past the existing 2050 deadline set in existing law.

OHA has a longstanding policy to protect wai and other natural resources that support traditional and customary practices guaranteed in our State Constitution. Haw. Const. Art. XII, § 7. Moreover, OHA has been involved with numerous lawsuits to ensure protection of streams, groundwater, and nearshore ecosystems consistent with Hawai'i's public trust doctrine, Haw. Const. Art. XI, § 1.

Unfortunately, tens of thousands of cesspools in the State discharge millions of gallons of untreated sewage into the ground every day, endangering public health, and degrading the quality of Hawai'i ground water, island streams and nearshore coastal waters and reef ecosystems. Recognizing this, the 2017 Legislature enacted Act 125, Session Laws of Hawai'i 2017, to require the upgrade, conversion, or sewer connection of all cesspools in the State by January 1, 2050. OHA acknowledges that cost and other factors have limited compliance and progress towards this goal.

**OHA believes that extending the deadline for compliance is not the appropriate strategy to advancing the state's goal to reduce nearshore pollution that endangers public health and degrades reef ecosystems.** Other important measures advancing this session, such as HB1618 to establish a revolving loan program, would provide more appropriate strategies for ensuring compliance. Moreover, OHA notes that in 2014, the Department of Health (DOH) proposed rules that would have required cesspools to be upgraded to a septic or other alternative sewage disposal system upon the sale of property containing them. Because the cost of upgrades could be incorporated into a new mortgage, this is a practical approach to ensuring more timely compliance with this important law. OHA supports these types of approaches to more directly advance progress towards cesspool conversion.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

March 2, 2026

**The Honorable Chris Todd, Chair**

House Committee on Finance

State Capitol, Conference Room 308 & Videoconference

**RE: House Bill 1985, HD1, Relating to Cesspools**

**HEARING: Monday, March 2, 2026, at 10:00 a.m.**

Aloha Chair Todd, 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 1985, HD1, which PART II: Allows certain extensions of the deadline for cesspool conversions. Establishes a goal for the Department of Health to prioritize the upgrade, conversion, or connection of cesspools that pose the highest risk to human health or the environment. 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 property owners and wastewater industry professionals about information and resources regarding the State's cesspool upgrade, conversion, and connection requirements and deadlines. 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 priorities<sup>1</sup> across the State and to convert 83,000 cesspools by 2050, at least 3,458 cesspools would need to be converted per year. 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 ("DOH"), "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."<sup>2</sup>

Given these challenges and costs, many homeowners may struggle to meet the deadlines for conversion. Allowing reasonable extensions in cases of financial inability or demonstrating efforts to pay and finance their cesspools upgrade, conversion, or connection can provide needed flexibility. In addition, improved outreach and education

---

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

<https://seagrantsoest.hawaii.edu/cesspools-tool/>

<sup>2</sup> Carollo. (January 21, 2021). *Cesspool Conversion Finance Research Report*.

<https://health.hawaii.gov/wastewater/files/2021/02/financefinalreportr.pdf>

REALTOR® is a registered collective membership mark which may be used only by real estate professionals who are members of the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® and subscribe to its strict Code of Ethics.



 808-733-7060

 808-737-4977

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

---

can help homeowners and wastewater industry professionals better understand available resources and options, enabling them to make informed decisions about converting cesspool to a DOH approved wastewater system.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.





To: The Honorable Representative Chris Todd, 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 HB1985 HD1 RELATING TO CESSPOOLS**

Hearing: Monday March 2, 2026 10:00 a.m.

Aloha Chair Todd, 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 **SUPPORTS HB1985 HD1 regarding outreach and education but proposes an amendment.**

**Effective public outreach is a critical part of a program to upgrade thousands of cesspools.** Homeowners should have access to full information. This bill would fund such access.

**The bill should be amended on page 3 line 12 to reference the Department's key role in protecting the public health and environment. The amended text would read "(c) The department, except in areas of high priority impact to public health or the environment, may grant extensions of up to five ..."**

Please pass the portion of the bill funding outreach and education and amend the bill as proposed herein!

Mahalo!

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



**HB-1985-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/28/2026 9:30:23 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/2/2026 10:00:00 AM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>            |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Glen Kagamida       | Individual          | Support                   | Written Testimony<br>Only |

Comments:

STRONG SUPPORT!!! MAHALO!

Glen Kagamida, Hilo