

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

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CHAIRPERSON  
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COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE  
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FIRST DEPUTY

CIARA W.K. KAHAHANE  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

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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  
ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Thursday, February 5, 2026  
9:00 AM

State Capitol, Conference Room 325 and Via Videoconference

In consideration of  
HOUSE BILL 2245  
RELATING TO THE ENVIRONMENT

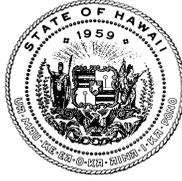
House Bill 2245, beginning 7/1/2027, proposes to require newly installed or modified individual wastewater systems that are near the shoreline or on highly porous soils to include denitrification capacity; and requires the Department of Health to provide appropriate reductions in requirements to leach fields and wastewater systems with denitrification capacity. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports this bill.**

Clean nearshore waters are vital to both public health and the health of nearshore reefs and associated fisheries. Wastewater systems have the potential to pollute groundwater and nearshore waters by introducing elevated levels of contaminants such as nitrogen, phosphorus, and pathogens. A 2023 Hawai'i-based study<sup>1</sup> found that septic and cesspool pollution is a major driver of coral reef decline along the West Hawai'i coastline. When excess nutrients, such as nitrogen, from these wastewater systems enter nearshore waters, they stimulate the growth of algae, which can smother coral. Requiring denitrification capacity in wastewater systems that are near the shoreline or likely to pollute groundwater will reduce the amount of excess nutrients entering Hawai'i's nearshore waters and support more resilient coral reef ecosystems. The Department also encourages the Legislature to work with the Department of Health to ensure these requirements are feasible to implement.

Mahalo for the opportunity to comment on this measure.

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<sup>1</sup> Gove, J.M., Williams, G.J., Lecky, J. *et al.* Coral reefs benefit from reduced land–sea impacts under ocean warming. *Nature* **621**, 536–542 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-023-06394-w>



**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 HB2245**  
**RELATING TO THE ENVIRONMENT.**

REPRESENTATIVE NICOLE E. LOWEN, CHAIR  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Hearing Date, Time and Room Number: 02/05/2026, 9:00 am, 325

1 **Fiscal Implications:** Undetermined. This measure may impact the priorities identified in the  
2 Governor's Executive Budget Request for the Department of Health's (Department)  
3 appropriations and personnel priorities.

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 Requiring the use of more certified wastewater equipment to reduce nitrogen in treated  
9 wastewater effluent supports the Department's mission to implement and maintain statewide  
10 programs for controlling water pollution. However, the Department does not believe that there  
11 are readily available geographic information system (GIS) tools and maps to efficiently and  
12 effectively implement the requirements of this measure.

13 A GIS version of all shoreline certification survey maps would be necessary to efficiently  
14 and effectively implement the requirements of this measure. However, there is currently no GIS  
15 version of all shoreline certification survey maps. The "Survey – Certified Shoreline Maps" (i.e.,  
16 shoreline certification survey maps) hosted on the State of Hawai'i Department of Accounting

1 and General Services website are PDF-version of maps, photographs, and documents, not GIS  
2 maps. Therefore, not all properties at or near the shoreline have shoreline certification survey  
3 maps, there may be multiple shoreline certification survey maps that were resurveyed over  
4 time, the last shoreline certification survey map may not be accurate according to the current  
5 shoreline, and evaluating the PDF-versions of the shoreline certification survey maps is a  
6 manual process.

7 A GIS version of the porosity of soils in the State of Hawai'i in order to identify highly  
8 porous substrate would be necessary to efficiently and effectively implement the requirements  
9 of this measure. However, from a preliminary review of the United States Department of  
10 Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service's (USDA-NRCS) Web Soil Survey website  
11 and tool, the percent porosity could not be found. The Department EMD currently does not  
12 have a GIS manager and is not able to evaluate the use of any available GIS map from USDA-  
13 NRCS or the State of Hawai'i GIS program.

14 Decreasing the soil absorption area of a wastewater disposal system may address land  
15 area issues that property owners with less than 10,000 square feet encounter. However, the  
16 current Hawai'i Administrative Rules, Title 11, Chapter 62 (HAR 11-62), Appendix D, Table III<sup>1</sup>,  
17 provides the required absorption area per bedroom or square foot based on percolation rate.  
18 Table III was based on the Manual of Septic-Tank Practice (formerly Public Health Service  
19 Publication No. 526, 1957), which was developed and published in 1957 by U.S. Department of  
20 Agriculture (USDA) Agricultural Research Service, USDA Farmers' Home Administration, USDA  
21 Federal Extension Service, USDA Forest Service, USDA Soil Conservation Service, American  
22 Public Health Association, U.S. Coast Guard, Conference of Municipal Public Health Engineers,  
23 Federal Housing Administration, Federation of Sewage and Industrial Wastes Associations, U.S.  
24 Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (USDHEW) Office of Education, USDHEW Public  
25 Health Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, Tennessee Valley Authority, Veterans Housing

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<sup>1</sup> <https://health.hawaii.gov/wastewater/files/2023/04/11-62-Wastewater-Systems-CtrlFEnter.pdf>

1 Administration, and industry advisors. Although the document is 69 years old, it is based on  
2 treatment from a septic tank, not an aerobic treatment unit that is National Sanitation  
3 Foundation, American National Standards Institute, Standard No. 245 (NSF/ANSI-245), fifty  
4 percent (50%) nitrogen reduction certified. Therefore, determining the specific amount to  
5 decrease the soil absorption area of the wastewater disposal system could be a State of Hawai'i  
6 funded special project that requires study and research, which may involve geotechnical  
7 engineering and hydrogeology by the University of Hawai'i or a consultant. If funded, the  
8 Department will implement this work in collaboration with stakeholders and research teams  
9 from the University of Hawai'i (UH), including the UH College of Engineering and the UH Water  
10 Resources Research Center (WRRC) and/or geotechnical engineering and hydrogeology  
11 consulting firm.

12 **Offered Amendments:** The Department respectfully offers the following revisions to the  
13 proposed measure. Additions appear as underlines and deletions appear as strikethroughs.

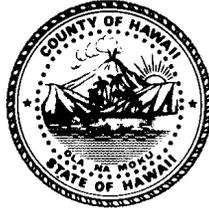
14 SECTION 1, Page 2, lines 1-3: "(2) The department of health to reduce requirements for  
15 ~~[leach fields and]~~disposal systems connected to wastewater systems with denitrification  
16 capacity."

17 Amendments offered below are only for where we are making recommendations for  
18 revision. We have highlighted text where we are recommending replacement or addition. If we  
19 are recommending deletion of any amendments in this measure, we have bracketed and struck  
20 through the text. All other amendments are unchanged.

21 SECTION 2, Page 3, lines 1-3: "(c) The department shall provide appropriate reductions  
22 in ~~[leach field and other]~~ the requirements for disposal systems connected to wastewater  
23 systems with denitrification capacity."

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

**HEATHER L. KIMBALL**  
**COUNCIL DISTRICT 1**  
*(North Hilo, Hāmākua, and portion of Waimea)*



Phone: (808) 961-8828  
Fax: (808) 961-8912  
Email: [Heather.Kimball@hawaiicounty.gov](mailto:Heather.Kimball@hawaiicounty.gov)

**HAWAI‘I COUNTY COUNCIL**  
25 Aupuni Street, Ste. 1402, Hilo, Hawai‘i 96720

DATE: January 29, 2026

TO: Representative Nicole Lowen,  
Chair of the House Committee on Energy & Environmental Protection

FROM: Heather L. Kimball, Council Member  
Council District 1

SUBJECT: **STRONG SUPPORT FOR HB 2245 – Relating to the Environment  
(Individual Wastewater Systems; Denitrification Capacity)**

Aloha Chair and Energy & Environmental Protection Committee Members,

I am writing in strong support of HB 2245, which requires newly installed or modified individual wastewater systems located near shorelines or on highly porous soils to incorporate denitrification capacity, while directing the Department of Health to provide appropriate reductions in leach field and related system requirements.

As the Hawai‘i County Council Member representing District 1 along the Hāmākua Coast, I see firsthand the connection between land-based wastewater pollution, reef health, and community well-being. Many of our rural and coastal communities rely on individual wastewater systems. In areas with porous volcanic soils and shallow groundwater, nutrients—especially nitrogen—can quickly migrate into nearshore waters, contributing to algal blooms, reef degradation, and diminished fisheries. These impacts directly affect subsistence practices, recreation, tourism, and shoreline protection.

This bill takes a smart, practical, and science-based approach. By requiring denitrification technology for systems installed within defined shoreline setbacks and porous substrates, the State targets areas of greatest risk while allowing continued development. Importantly, the measure also directs the Department of Health to reduce other system requirements where advanced treatment is used, helping to offset costs and making compliance more feasible for homeowners.

For Hawai‘i County, this is a critical resilience strategy. Healthy reefs protect our coastlines from erosion and storm surge, support local food systems, and sustain our cultural relationship with the ocean. Investments in wastewater upgrades are investments in climate adaptation, public health, and long-term infrastructure savings.

Dr. Holeka Goro Inaba, Council Chair  
Kimball Travel Report – 2025 NACo Annual Conference & Exposition  
August 6, 2025  
Page 2

HB 2245 aligns with our county's broader sustainability goals and ongoing efforts to reduce cesspool and wastewater impacts statewide. It reflects the kind of forward-looking, preventive policy that protects both people and place.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify. I respectfully urge your favorable consideration of HB 2245.

Sincerely,  
Heather Kimball  
Council Member, District 1  
Hawai'i County Council

**HB-2245**

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 1:17:14 PM

Testimony for EEP on 2/5/2026 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Lisa Bishop	Friends of Hanauma Bay	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Lowen, Vice Chair Perruso, and EEP Committee members, Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of this important bill critical to our near shore marine environments.

Please support and pass this Bill!

With Aloha,

Lisa Bishop, MS

Friends of Hanauma Bay I President



February 4, 2026

House Committee on Energy & Environmental Protection Hawai'i State Legislature Via Electronic Transmission

Re: Testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT** of HB2245, Relating to Wastewater Systems  
Hearing: Thursday, February 5, 2026 9 a.m. via Videoconferencing

Aloha Chair Lowen, Vice-Chair Perruso, and Committee Members:

On behalf of the non-profit WAI: Wastewater Alternatives & Innovations (WAI) I am writing in **strong support** of HB2245. This bill strengthens protection of Hawai'i's nearshore waters and coral reefs by requiring denitrification-capable individual wastewater systems in high-risk coastal areas.

Nitrogen pollution from onsite systems is a significant land-based source of contamination to coastal waters, particularly in shoreline zones and areas with highly porous soils where groundwater transport is rapid. HB2245 would require newly installed or modified individual wastewater systems (IWS) that are near the shoreline or likely to pollute groundwater near the coast to include denitrification capacity ensuring a minimum fifty percent reduction in nitrogen. This bill is designed to reduce harm to threatened coral reefs and nearshore ecosystems.

WAI is an environmental non-profit dedicated to protecting our water resources by reducing sewage pollution from cesspools. We support more innovative, affordable, and eco-friendly solutions to wastewater management. Better sanitation systems protect public health and valuable natural resources like groundwater, streams, coral reefs and coastal areas. Hawaii has more than 83,000 cesspools across the state, discharging 52 million gallons of raw sewage each day into Hawai'i's waters. Along with threats to public health and drinking water resources, new research shows that polluted wastewater poses significant harm to coral reefs and the near-shore environment.

A 2023 [Hawai'i-based study](#) found that nitrogen from septic and cesspool pollution is a major driver of coral reef decline along the West Hawai'i coastline.<sup>1</sup> When nitrogen from cesspool pollution enters nearshore waters it will stimulate the growth of algae that in turn can smother coral. Requiring denitrification capacity in wastewater systems that are near the shoreline or likely to pollute groundwater will reduce the amount of contaminants entering Hawai'i's nearshore waters and support more resilient coral reef ecosystems. Wastewater-derived nitrogen contributes to algal blooms, reef smothering, reduced water clarity, and weakened coral resilience. Onsite wastewater systems located near shorelines represent a direct pathway for nutrient pollution to enter coastal waters. By addressing nutrient pollution at the source, HB2245 protects groundwater, nearshore waters, public health, fisheries, and coral reef ecosystems while modernizing wastewater policy to reflect current science.

WAI respectfully submits testimony in strong support of HB2245 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 and Innovations, and mahalo for your leadership on this important issue.

Aloha,

*Jessica Kai Paisley*

Jessica Kai Paisley, Program and Legal Specialist Wastewater Alternatives and Innovations

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<sup>1</sup> (Gove, J.M., Williams, G.J., Lecky, J. *et al.* Coral reefs benefit from reduced land-sea impacts under ocean warming. *Nature* **621**, 536–542 (2023))



# A Community Dedicated to Saving Puakō Reef

Return the reef to its historic 70% coral coverage from its existing 7%.

[www.Puako4reefs.org](http://www.Puako4reefs.org) \* [Puako for Reefs Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/PuakoForReefs)

Story map of Puakō: [Wahi Pana -A Sacred Place](#)

## HEARING FOR STATE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Thursday, February 5, 2026 9:00 a.m.

Conference Room 325, State Capitol

**DATE:** February 4, 2026

**TO:** House Committee on Energy and Environmental Protection Chair, Nicole Lowen, and Vice-Chair Amy Perruso and Members Cory Chun, Kirstin Kahaloa, Matthias Kusch, Sean Quintan, and Lauren Matsumoto.

**RE:** House Bill 2245. RELATING TO THE ENVIRONMENT.

*Beginning 7/1/2027, requires newly installed or modified individual wastewater systems that are near the shoreline or on highly porous soils to include denitrification capacity. Requires the Department of Health to provide appropriate reductions in requirements to leach fields and wastewater systems with denitrification capacity.*

Puakō For Reefs is a volunteer run, 501c3 non-profit organization which strongly supports HB 2245 to add a requirement for denitrification capacity from all new and upgraded individual (onsite) wastewater systems. The systems that will be subject to this requirement are either near the shoreline or are near other bodies of water where groundwater can be polluted from wastewater.

There are so many issues in Hawai'i regarding wastewater affecting our reefs, and near shore waters—this is a small BUT IMPORTANT step along the road. Please help our state to start moving in the right direction in regard to cleaner wastewater by approving this measure.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Puakō for Reefs Board members and its many volunteers

**Karen Anderson**, Board Chair, 206-724-1551 [Karen.anderson@puako4reefs.org](mailto:Karen.anderson@puako4reefs.org)

**Stephanie Erickson**, Board Treasurer, 508-344-0114, [Stephanie.erickson@puako4reefs.org](mailto:Stephanie.erickson@puako4reefs.org)

**Barbara Bell**, Board Secretary, 808-937-2573, [bbellster@gmail.com](mailto:bbellster@gmail.com)

**George Fry**, Board member. 808-756-3877, [gfryiii@gmail.com](mailto:gfryiii@gmail.com)



To: The Honorable Representative Nicole Lowen, Chair, the Honorable Amy Perruso, Vice Chair, and Members of the Energy and Environmental Protection Committee.

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

Re: **Hearing HB2245 RELATING TO THE ENVIRONMENT**

Hearing: Thursday February 5, 2026 9:00 a.m.

Aloha Chair Lowen, Vice Chair Perruso, and Members of the Energy and Environmental Protection 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 **STRONGLY SUPPORTS** HB2245!

Wastewater from individual wastewater systems (including cesspools) is the largest water pollution problem in Hawai'i. In particular, individual wastewater system (IWS) pollution is harming the coral reefs that protect our very way of life here in Hawai'i —our recreation-based visitor economy, our fisheries and our shorelines. Degraded reefs are not only bad for the environment, but they are bad for tourism, the economy and the protection of the Islands from storms, floods, hurricanes, fires, and tsunamis. Places such as Puako in Hawaii County and Ma'alaea in Maui have lost most of their coral reefs in large part from wastewater pollution.

Sewering is a better option environmentally, but quite expensive and not economically feasible in some locations. Many on-site conventional individual wastewater systems release nitrogen pollution into the groundwater that can be harmful to coral reefs, especially in areas close to the shore or in areas with highly porous soils, where

groundwater transport is rapid. Onsite individual wastewater systems located near shorelines represent a direct pathway for nutrient pollution to enter coastal waters. Wastewater-derived nitrogen and other nutrients contribute to algal blooms, reef smothering, reduced water clarity, and weakened coral resilience. As ocean heating intensifies reef stress, reducing wastewater pollution is one of the most effective management tools available to mitigate the damage to reefs from ocean-warming events.

A 2023 Hawai'i-based study found that septic and cesspool pollution is a major driver of coral reef decline along the West Hawai'i coastline. When excess nutrients, such as nitrogen, from these individual wastewater systems enter nearshore waters, they stimulate the growth of algae, which can smother coral. Requiring denitrification capacity in individual wastewater systems that are near the shoreline will reduce the amount of contaminants entering Hawai'i's nearshore waters and support more resilient coral reef ecosystems. Coral reefs benefit from reduced land-sea impacts under ocean warming. Gove, J.M., Williams, G.J., Lecky, J. *et al.*, *Nature* 621, 536–542 (2023).

Traditional septic systems are much better than cesspools in treating harmful pathogens that can make people sick, but they don't treat nutrients such as nitrogen as effectively as aerobic treatment units (ATU's). Fortunately, where on-site individual wastewater systems are needed, modern treatment technology exists to significantly reduce nitrogen loading before effluent reaches groundwater. There are new passive and nature-based individual wastewater systems that reduce nitrogen as well as pathogens and should be explored.

This bill is designed to reduce harm to threatened coral reefs and nearshore ecosystems by requiring denitrification for newly installed or modified individual wastewater systems in high-risk coastal and highly porous soil areas without increasing costs.

This measure advances science-based wastewater policy by:

- Requiring denitrification capacity for individual wastewater systems within 200 feet of the shoreline statewide and within 1,200 feet of shore in high-risk porous soil areas in Hawaii County
- Using National Sanitation Foundation/American National Standards Institute Standard 245 as a clear performance benchmark
- Directing DOH to make appropriate reductions to leachfield and other system requirements for systems with denitrification capacity, helping to offset costs without degrading water quality
- Using DLNR-certified shoreline determinations and established soil datasets for consistency.

Please pass this bill to protect our coral reefs!

Mahalo!

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



February 4, 2026

House Committee on Energy & Environmental Protection  
Hawai'i State Legislature  
Via Electronic Transmission

Re: Testimony in SUPPORT of HB2245, Relating to the Environment  
Hearing: Thursday, February 5, 2026, 9:00 AM CR 325 Via Videoconference

To: The Honorable Chair Lowen, Vice Chair Perruso, and members of the committee,

**The Surfrider Foundation, Hawai'i region, is testifying in strong support of HB2245** which requires newly installed or modified individual wastewater systems near the shoreline or on porous soils to include denitrification capacity.

Surfrider Foundation is a grassroots activist network dedicated to protecting our oceans, waves, and beaches. Through our Clean Water Initiative, we monitor coastal water quality, lead site-specific stewardship efforts, and advocate for solutions at the local, state, and federal levels. Our Blue Water Task Force (BWTF), a citizen-science program on Kaua'i, Maui, and O'ahu, regularly tests more than 80 sites statewide for enterococcus, a fecal indicator bacteria. Hawai'i's BWTF sites are consistently ranked among Surfrider Foundation's National Beach Bacteria Hotspots. The sites with the highest bacteria counts are often located in priority cesspool areas, such as Kōloa Landing on Kaua'i and Kahalu'u on O'ahu. Our work to address wastewater pollution and protect environmental and community health directly intersects with the need to address wastewater-associated nutrient pollution, which is devastating Hawai'i's coral reef ecosystems.

As coral reefs face increasing stress from warming and acidifying oceans, protecting Hawai'i's nearshore water quality is essential for ecosystem resilience and public health. Clean nearshore waters support coral reefs that protect shorelines and sustain fisheries and recreation. In 2023, peer-reviewed research published in *Nature* demonstrated that reefs protected from land-based, particularly wastewater, pollution recover more effectively from ocean-warming events.

Coral reefs are highly sensitive to pollution, making reef-safe wastewater technologies critical. Nutrient pollution discharged from wastewater systems fuels algal blooms that smother and kill coral reefs. Wastewater systems located close to the shoreline pose a disproportionate risk because there is limited to no filtration and treatment before pollutants reach nearshore waters.

HB2245 takes a practical, science-based approach by requiring denitrification technology for newly installed or modified individual wastewater systems in high-risk areas. Ensuring these systems meet NSF/ANSI Standard 245 will help reduce nitrogen pollution at the source and protect Hawai'i's nearshore waters, coral reefs, and public health.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of HB2245 on behalf of Surfrider Foundation's Hawai'i chapters and members statewide.

Sincerely,

Hanna Lilley  
Hawai'i Regional Manager  
Surfrider Foundation

**Testimony of The Nature Conservancy  
Supporting HB2245, Relating to the Environment  
Committee on Energy & Environmental Protection  
February 5, 2026 at 9:00 am  
Conference Room 325 and via Videoconference**

Dear Chair Lowen, Vice Chair Perruso, and Members of the Committee:

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify today. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) Hawai'i and Palmyra supports HB2245, which requires newly installed or modified individual wastewater systems that are near the shoreline or on highly porous soils to include denitrification capacity and requires the Department of Health to provide appropriate reductions in requirements to leach fields and wastewater systems with denitrification capacity.

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. Without clean coastal waters, our reef ecosystems face even greater risk amid growing global stressors, including climate change.

Cesspools cause harm to water quality within adjacent groundwater, anchialine, coral reef systems and fisheries by introducing elevated amounts of organic nitrogen and phosphorus, pathogens, and other contaminants. These pollutants can encourage excess algal and bacterial growth, degrade aquatic ecosystems, and pose risks to human health. Our research in He'eia, Maunaloa, 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.

Our coral reefs are extremely sensitive to pollution. By upgrading cesspools to technologies that reduce overall non-point source pollution, we can reduce stress on our nearshore ecosystems. Importantly, wastewater systems that are close to the shoreline have a disproportionate impact on ecosystems because there is less space for treatment than those very far from the coast. These wastewater systems would benefit from having denitrification technology to reduce the flow of harmful nutrients to our coral reefs.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of HB2245.

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*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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# HAWAI'I OCEAN LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE



February 5, 2026

Hawai'i State Legislature  
House Committee on Energy & Environmental Protection

Re: Testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT** for HB 2245, Relating to the Environment

Aloha Chair Lowen, Vice Chair Perruso, and esteemed members of the committee,

The Ocean Legislative Task Force—a coalition of more than 150 individuals across over 20 organizations statewide—**strongly supports** HB2245, relating to the environment.

Wastewater from individual wastewater systems, including cesspools, remains one of the most significant sources of land-based pollution impacting Hawai'i's nearshore waters. Nutrient-laden discharges—particularly nitrogen—travel quickly through porous soils and groundwater into coastal ecosystems, fueling algal blooms, degrading water quality, and weakening coral reef resilience. These impacts threaten not only marine ecosystems, but also subsistence practices, fisheries, shoreline protection, and Hawai'i's visitor-based economy.

Scientific research continues to demonstrate the link between cesspool and septic pollution and coral reef decline, particularly along West Hawai'i's coastline. As warming oceans place additional stress on reefs, reducing wastewater pollution is one of the most effective management strategies available to mitigate long-term damage and support reef recovery.

HB2245 advances science-based wastewater policy by encouraging the installation of modern wastewater treatment technologies and requiring denitrification capacity for systems located in high-risk coastal and porous soil areas. These systems can substantially reduce nitrogen loading before effluent reaches groundwater, providing an important tool for protecting nearshore waters while maintaining practical on-site treatment options where sewerage is not feasible.

By supporting the conversion or upgrade of cesspools and outdated systems, this measure represents a critical step toward safeguarding water quality, strengthening coastal resilience, and protecting the natural resources that sustain our communities.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this important measure.

*The Hawai'i Ocean Legislative Task Force advocates for measures that advance cesspool conversion and wastewater management, protect Hawai'i's coral reefs and reef fish, ensure transparent and sustainable implementation of the Green Fee program and long-term environmental staffing, and support other measures that strengthen Hawai'i's coastal and marine ecosystems.*

**HB-2245**

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 4:40:05 PM

Testimony for EEP on 2/5/2026 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Douglas Perrine	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The main threat to Hawaii's coastal ecosystems from wastewater runoff is the excess nitrogen which fertilizes destructive algae that smother coral and displace edible limu. Removing nitrogen from wastewater entering the ocean is the most important function of a treatment system. However simple septic systems do not accomplish this vital task. We can do better! Please pass HB2245.

**HB-2245**

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 6:01:04 PM

Testimony for EEP on 2/5/2026 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
arleen velasco	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I stongly support eliminating all harmful contaminants, especially nitrogen,from entering our coastal waters. Nitrogen from fertilizer and sewage runoff severely damages coral reefs by causing nutrient pollution which fuels macroalgae growth that smothers corals and reduces oxygen. High nitrogen levels disrupt the vital symbiotic relationship between corals and algae, causing metabolic stress, increased disease susceptibility, and severe bleaching. Please help the coral reef ecosystem.

**HB-2245**

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 6:43:51 PM

Testimony for EEP on 2/5/2026 9:00:00 AM



Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carrie Ostroski	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am personally invested in and concerned about the state of our coral reefs, and I urge you to support HB2245, which relates to individual wastewater systems and denitrification capacity. This measure is a critical step toward protecting Hawai‘i’s nearshore waters, coral reefs, and public health.

HB2245 is science-based and community-centered. Cesspools and conventional wastewater systems discharge nitrogen into groundwater, which then flows into our coastal waters. This pollution harms coral reefs, fisheries, and shoreline resilience, especially in areas with highly porous soils. By requiring denitrification capacity for new or modified systems near shorelines, HB2245 directly addresses this threat and ensures that our wastewater infrastructure supports ecosystem recovery from ocean-warming events.

Importantly, HB2245 also directs the Department of Health to reduce requirements for leach fields and systems with denitrification capacity, providing flexibility and encouraging adoption of cleaner technologies. This balanced approach protects our environment and human health, while offering practical pathways for compliance.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge your support of HB2245.

With Aloha,

Carrie Ostroski

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