



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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**Testimony in SUPPORT of HB605 HD1
RELATING TO WASTEWATER**

REPRESENTATIVE SYLVIA LUKE, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Hearing Date: February 24, 2017
Time: 11:00 am

Room Number: 308

1 **Fiscal Implications:** None.

2 **Department Testimony:** The Department supports this measure. Currently, Hawaii
3 Administrative Rules, Chapter 11-62, "Wastewater Systems," require household aerobic treatment
4 units to have a NSF/ANSI Standard 40 certification. The NSF/ANSI Standard 40 does not address
5 nitrogen reduction in the treated effluent.

6 The Department agrees that household aerobic units that discharge their effluent directly to
7 groundwater should be required to meet the requirements of NSF/ANSI Standard 245. This
8 standard has performance measures that reduce the amount of nitrogen discharged into surface
9 waters by at least 50 percent in some watersheds. Requiring NSF/ANSI Standard 245 certification
10 could help meet the growing demand for nutrient reduction in coastal areas and sensitive
11 environments. Improved wastewater treatment is one of the most effective ways to reduce nitrogen
12 pollution in water.

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



HB605 HD1
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The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS** HB605 HD1, which seeks to mitigate the impacts of sewage and wastewater discharge into our groundwater sources.

OHA commends this measure's intent to better safeguard our culturally, ecologically, and economically critical groundwater resources, as well as the coastal areas and nearshore waters where groundwater may be discharged. Concerns regarding the impacts of wastewater disposal to our health and environment have heightened in recent years, as the public has gained a greater awareness of the connection between wastewater disposal and groundwater quality.¹ As recognized in this measure, even aerobic treatment systems, which reduce pathogenic bacteria in treated effluent, can impact water resources through the release of excess nitrogen compounds; such excess nitrogen can result in algal blooms and ecological imbalances that threaten aquatic environments, as well as in negative health impacts to humans and animals that consume nitrogen-contaminated water. As cesspools are phased out of use in our islands, the increasing reliance on aerobic treatment systems counsels stronger regulatory measures, to minimize these systems' potential impacts on our groundwater and groundwater-associated resources.

By subjecting aerobic treatment systems to heightened federal standards relating to nitrogen content in treated effluent, this measure may mitigate the current and future impacts of these systems on our environment and public health.

Accordingly, OHA urges the Committee to **PASS** HB605 HD1. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

¹ See, e.g., ROBERT B. WHITTIER AND ALY I. EL-KADI, HUMAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL RISK RANKING OF ONSITE SEWAGE DISPOSAL SYSTEMS ES-1– ES-2 (2009); Michael L. Parsons et. al., *A multivariate assessment of the coral ecosystem health of two embayments on the lee of the island of Hawai'i*, 56 MARINE POLLUTION BULLETIN 1138 (2008); *Judge: Maui needs permit for Lahaina wastewater*, HONOLULU STAR-ADVERTISER, June 2, 2014; *Big Island effort targets cesspools to save reef*, HONOLULU STAR-ADVERTISER, February 4, 2014; SEWAGE DISPOSAL SYSTEMS ES-1– ES-2 (2009); Michael L. Parsons et. al., *A multivariate assessment of the coral ecosystem health of two embayments on the lee of the island of Hawai'i*, 56 MARINE POLLUTION BULLETIN 1138 (2008); *Judge: Maui needs permit for Lahaina wastewater*, HONOLULU STAR-ADVERTISER, June 2, 2014; *Big Island effort targets cesspools to save reef*, HONOLULU STAR-ADVERTISER, February 4, 2014.