

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

**Testimony in SUPPORT of HB2626 HD1
RELATING TO CESSPOOLS**

REPRESENTATIVE JOHN M. MIZUNO, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Hearing Date: February 14, 2018
Time: 8:30 a.m.

Room Number: 329

1 **Fiscal Implications:** The Department of Health (Department) would need an appropriation to hire
2 a third-party consultant to conduct a study as noted in the measure. We appreciate and support the
3 intent of this initiative, but defer to the Governor's Executive Supplemental Budget Request for the
4 Department's appropriations and personnel priorities.

5 **Department Testimony:** The Department supports this measure. The Department agrees that in
6 order to implement the requirements of Act 125, a thorough evaluation of pertinent considerations,
7 including but not limited to funding mechanism options, sewer expansion and connection options,
8 and best practice technology options for upgrading cesspools would be prudent at this time.
9 Cesspools are a major source of pollution to Hawaii's waters. There are approximately 88,000
10 cesspools in the State, discharging approximately 53 million gallons of untreated sewage into the
11 groundwater every day. Groundwater flows into drinking water sources; since ninety-five percent
12 of all drinking water in Hawaii comes from ground water sources, this cesspool pollution can
13 potentially harm human health. Groundwater also flows into streams and the ocean, harming public
14 health and the environment, including beaches, recreational waters, and coral reefs. Hawaii needs
15 to upgrade cesspools statewide as soon as feasible in order to protect the public health and
16 environment.

17 The Department recognizes that it can take up to a year to procure the services of a third-party
18 consultant. The deadline to submit the study should be extended by an additional year (December
19 31, 2020).

20 **Offered Amendments:**

21 SECTION 1. (c) should be amended to read:

1 “The department of health shall submit the study to the legislature by December 31, 2020.”

2 SECTION 4. should be amended to read:

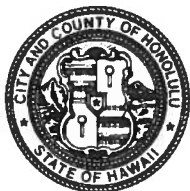
3 “SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the
4 sum of \$ or so much thereof as many be necessary for fiscal years 2018-2019 and
5 2019-2020 to conduct a study on the upgrade, conversion, or connection of cesspools
6 statewide, including financing issues, and financing mechanisms.”

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

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

1000 ULUOHIA STREET, SUITE 308, KAPOLEI, HAWAII 96707
TELEPHONE: (808) 768-3486 • FAX: (808) 768-3487 • WEBSITE: <http://envhonorolulu.org>

KIRK CALDWELL
MAYOR



LORI M.K. KAHIKINA, P.E.
DIRECTOR

TIMOTHY A. HOUGHTON
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

ROSS S. TANIMOTO, P.E.
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

IN REPLY REFER TO:
WAS 18-27

February 12, 2018

The Honorable John M. Mizuno, Chair
and Members of the Committee on
Health and Human Services
House of Representatives
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Mizuno and Members:

Subject: House Bill 2626 HD1, Relating to Cesspools

The City and County of Honolulu's (City) Department of Environmental Services generally supports HB 2626 HD1, and the long term conversion of cesspools to other waste disposal options.

HB 2626, HD1, and the proposed advisory council takes a more appropriate larger view than the earlier proposed approach, and we believe the larger view is more appropriate. We believe it is important to take a community by community approach to determine what type of cesspool conversion is appropriate to prevent piecemeal conversions which would limit later willingness, and dollars, to switch to a community wide approach. The determination on whether a consultant is needed for this purpose should be left to the advisory council and not mandated by the Legislature.

Additionally, while important, only addressing cesspool conversions may not fully address the groundwater and nearshore water pollution issues which generated the recent cesspool report. Consideration should be given to using resources to address the major sources of impact rather than just focusing on cesspools.

Thank you for your consideration.

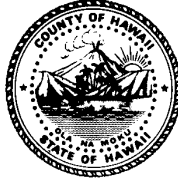
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lori M.K. Kahikina", is written over a printed name and title.

Lori M.K. Kahikina, P.E.
Director

Harry Kim
Mayor

Wilfred M. Okabe
Managing Director



William A. Kucharski
Director

Diane A. Noda
Deputy Director

County of Hawai'i

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

345 Kekūānō'a Street, Suite 41 · Hilo, Hawai'i 96720
(808) 961-8083 · Fax (808) 961-8086
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<http://www.hawaiicounty.gov/environmental-management/>

February 12, 2018

Rep. Chris Lee, Chair
Committee on Energy & Environmental Protection
State of Hawai'i House of Representatives
Hawai'i State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Re: **Comment on HB2626 HD1**
(Relating to Cesspools)

Date: February 14, 2018 (Wednesday)

Time: 8:30 a.m.

Dear Chairperson Lee and Members of the Committee on Energy & Environmental Protection:

The County of Hawaii (COH) submits the following comments on HB2626 HD1.

1. The creation of a Cess Pool Working Group (Group) within the Hawaii Department of Health (HDOH) to "work in collaboration" with a third-party consultant selected by the HDOH is proposed by this amended Bill. The fifteen (15) person Group, will, it is assumed, review reports provided by the consultant and provide comments to the consultant/HDOH, but there is no indication within the legislation as to what the actual responsibilities or authorities of the Group are to be.
 - a. Clarification of the role of the Group is recommended. There is no definition or guidance as to what "collaboration" means. For example, it would be helpful for the legislation to state whether the Group should or should not approve submitted reports to the legislature, among other possible responsibilities. If the Group is to be solely a resource from which HDOH would extract information and/or data, then it is recommended that the legislation state this as the Group's function/responsibility.
2. This Bill, as amended can be a positive step forward in attempting to handle very expensive yet necessary actions by the State of Hawaii.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William A. Kucharski".

William A. Kucharski, Director, Department Environmental Management, COH
is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer.

HB-2626-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/12/2018 1:27:58 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/14/2018 8:30:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| ERICA PEREZ | Coral Reef Alliance | Support | Yes |

Comments:

To: House Representative Chair Mr. John M. Mizuno Health & Human Services Committee

Re: HB 2626 HD 1 Relating to Cesspools

Wednesday, February 14, 2018 08:30 am

Conference Room 329

State Capitol

415 South Beretania St.

From: Erica Perez- Program Manager (Hawai'i Island)

eperez@coral.org

Coral Reef Alliance (CORAL)

Subject: I am testifying in Support of HB 2626 HD 1 relating to cesspools

Links: [Puakā, Hawaii: Community Feasibility Study and Preliminary Engineering Report & The Synthesis of Waterquality and Coral Reefs in Relation to Sewage Contamination: Importance to the Puakā Region of South Kohala & Spatial distribution and effects of sewage on Puakā's \(Hawai'i\) coral reefs](#)

I am testifying in Support of HB 2626 HD 1 on behalf of the Coral Reef Alliance (CORAL). CORAL is an international coral reef conservation organization that works with communities, businesses, and governments to save coral reefs. With field offices on Maui and Hawai'i Island, and projects throughout the Main Hawaiian Islands, CORAL uses a science-based approach to improve coastal water quality. Throughout the state,

we address known sources of land-based pollution such as wastewater discharge and stormwater runoff. Untreated wastewater leaching from residential cesspools is one such source of land-based pollution negatively impacting Hawai'i's nearshore environment and is a direct threat to coral and marine ecosystem health in Hawai'i and is a threat to public health and drinking water.

The legislature finds that Hawai'i's coral reefs contribute to approximately \$800,000,000 to the state's economy annually. **Prioritizing water quality in support of coral vitality is critical to the health and our future.**

We acknowledge the significant costs and capacity demand associated with leading this statewide effort. Due to the urgency of the problem we support a third party filling the capacity demand and support DOH in conducting the study with guidance from a state working-group. We urge the state and counties to work together and identify resources and expertise required to identify a long-term holistic solution for Hawai'i.

CORAL has been working with the PuakÅ• community in South Kohala, Hawai'i since 2014, a priority location identified in the DOH 2018 Report Relating to Cesspools and Prioritization for Replacement. Our collaborative process and community engagement has led this grassroots community-based management initiative. The Clean Water for Reefs PuakÅ• project identified a wastewater solution from a holistic approach, identifying sustainable financing, operations and management, and long-term engineering demands. Several treatment options were evaluated and none proved to be as cost-effective nor as environmentally beneficial as an onsite wastewater treatment facility.

Community members are working with CORAL to implement this solution to replace their cesspools and outdated septic tanks thereby securing the health of PuakÅ• for future generations. The PuakÅ• community's initiative and efforts are an example that should be followed throughout the state and can help inform the Department of Health (DOH) in developing a transition for shoreline properties across Hawai'i.

In closing, CORAL supports HB 2626 HD 1 for the above reasons. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony. During this period as you consider public comment, we are happy to answer questions or provide additional materials in support of this rule.

Sincerely,



Erica Perez, Program Manager (Hawai'i Island)

eperez@coral.org

Coral Reef Alliance



Feb. 13, 2018

**Support for HB2626: Relating to Cesspools
Committee: Health & Human Services (HHS)
Hearing: Feb. 14, 2018, 8:30am, Rm. 329**

Dear Chair Mizuno, Vice Chair Kobayashi and Members of the HHS Committee,

As the Hawaii Manager of the Surfrider Foundation, I am writing in strong support of HB2268, the bill to create an Advisory Council to come up with a plan to reduce the number of cesspools in the state. With more than 5000 activists and members across the state, the Hawaii Chapters of The Surfrider Foundation supported the original bill to upgrade cesspools to better septic systems, aerobic treatment units (ATU) or sewer. But since the passage of Act 120 two years ago, there have only been a handful of cesspool upgrades, and we are working with the Hawaii Dept. of Health (DOH) to improve their public outreach and community involvement.

Non-point source discharge from cesspools in Hawaii is a serious threat to our water quality, and this bill would create an advisory council to come up with a comprehensive plan to do cesspool upgrades, conversions or connections to sewer lines, along with a pilot project to show the viability of the plan. With about 88,000 across the state, Hawaii has the highest number of cesspools in the country, and many pose a threat to water resources. These substandard wastewater systems leach untreated human waste, harmful pathogens and nutrient loads into nearby waters. Cesspools are a leading source of water pollution, and their effluent can contaminate drinking water sources, streams and oceans with disease-causing pathogens, algae-causing nutrients & harmful substances.

In monitoring the water quality of North Shore beaches on Kauai, the Chapter has seen improvement after the replacement of cesspools at Kauai County beach parks and along the Hanalei River, where enterococcus counts at the beach at the Pavilion and estuary decreased approximately 56% between 2004 and 2013. Where sewer connections are not available, septic systems and ATU's are a big step forward in protecting public health and the environment. We helped pass the bill to give homeowners tax credits for upgrading their cesspools within 400 feet of the shoreline, waterways or wells because they are the most dangerous. We hope they will make sure the replacements have some form of aerobic digestion.

Unfortunately, we recognize that the \$10,000 tax credit does not cover the full cost of new septic systems, which can be as much as \$20k-\$30k. So we support creating an advisory council and pilot project to study the issue and come up with the best solutions for the state.

Because cesspools pose serious public health and environmental problems, we need a comprehensive plan that will ensure that we as a state can help implement more cesspool upgrades, conversions and connections to sewer. We also need to launch pilot projects in the priority areas where existing cesspools are a threat to nearby wells, streams or bodies of water, as well as the water table. Mahalo for your consideration and leadership in dealing with these serious water quality issues.

Aloha,

Stuart Coleman

Stuart H. Coleman, Hawaii Manager



49 South Hotel Street, Room 314 | Honolulu, HI 96813
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COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Representative John Mizuno, Chair
Representative Bert Kobayashi, Vice Chair

Wednesday, February 14, 2018, 8:30 a.m., Conference Room 329

HB2626 HD1– Relating to Cesspools

TESTIMONY

Nancy Davlantes, Legislative Committee Member, League of Women Voters of Hawaii

Chair John Mizuno, Vice-Chair Bert Kobayashi, committee members:

The League of Women Voters of Hawaii supports HB2626 HD1 that would require the Department of Health to hire a third-party consultant to conduct a study on the issues relating to the upgrade or conversion of cesspools. It would also establish the cesspool conversion working group to assist the third-party consultant on the study.

The League's approach to environmental protection and pollution control is one of problem solving, the goal aiming to prevent ecological degradation. We are gratified to see the number of bills being considered this session to confront the environmental damage caused by cesspools.

According to the state Department of Health, cesspools are a major source of pollution to Hawaii's waters. The approximately 88,000 cesspools in Hawaii discharge some 53 million gallons of untreated sewage into the groundwater every day. Groundwater flows into drinking water sources, and, since 95 percent of all drinking water in Hawaii comes from ground water sources, this cesspool pollution can potentially harm human health. Groundwater also flows into streams and the ocean, harming public health and the environment, including beaches, recreational waters, and coral reefs.

There is no question that Hawaii must work to find ways to convert or upgrade the thousands of cesspools in the state, including evaluating the feasibility and development of a grant program to fund cesspool upgrades statewide as soon as possible in order to protect the public health and environment.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

HB-2626-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/13/2018 2:47:59 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/14/2018 8:30:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Melodie Aduja | OCC Legislative Priorities Committee | Support | No |

Comments:

**PRESENTATION OF THE
OAHU COUNTY COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES
DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF HAWAII
TO THE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION OF 2018
Wednesday, February 14, 2018
8:30 a.m.
Hawaii State Capitol, Conference Room 329**

RE: Testimony in Support of HB 2626 HD1 RELATING TO CESSPOOLS

To the Honorable John M. Mizuno, Chair; the Honorable Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice-Chair and the Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services:

Good morning. My name is Melodie Aduja. I serve as Chair of the Oahu County Committee ("OCC") Legislative Priorities Committee of the Democratic Party of Hawaii. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on House Bill No.2626 HD1 regarding a study on issues relating to the upgrade or conversion of cesspools to department-approved wastewater treatment systems or the connection of cesspools to a sewerage system statewide.

The OCC Legislative Priorities Committee is in favor of House Bill No.2626 HD1 and supports its passage.

House Bill No.2626 HD1 is in alignment with the Platform of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i ("DPH"), 2016, as it directs the department of health to hire a third-party consultant to conduct a study on issues relating to the upgrade or conversion of cesspools to department-approved wastewater treatment systems or the connection of cesspools to a sewerage system statewide, to be referred to collectively as "cesspool conversion", as required by Act 125, Session Laws of Hawaii 2017. The study shall be conducted in collaboration with the cesspool conversion working group.

The DPH Platform states that "[w]e support the protection of our 'aina against destruction by corporate, government, or military usage and expect full restoration and reparation of environmental damage. To handle current and future demands for water, we must assess the current condition of our aquifers and take appropriate actions to secure our freshwater resources.

We support the democratic participation of citizens and residents to protect (i) valuable coastal ecosystems and reefs from misuse and (ii) beaches for public use and recreation. The Hawai'i Coastal Zone Management (CZM) law, HRS Chapter 205A, currently provides for public participation in the management of coastal resources.

We believe in the vigorous enforcement of our environmental laws and increased public-private stewardship and citizen involvement in protecting our resources. We know that climate change is a real threat to our islands and the world. (Platform of the DPH, P. 8, Lines 422-433 (2016)).

Given that House Bill No.2626 HD1 provides for a study on issues relating to the upgrade or conversion of cesspools to department-approved wastewater treatment systems or the connection of cesspools to a sewerage system statewide, it is the position of the OCC Legislative Priorities Committee to support this measure.

Thank you very much for your kind consideration.

Sincerely yours,

/s/ Melodie Aduja

Melodie Aduja, Chair, OCC Legislative Priorities Committee

Email: legislativepriorities@gmail.com, Tel.: (808) 258-8889

HB-2626-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/12/2018 9:20:59 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/14/2018 8:30:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Carla Christensen | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

I have been a resident of Puako Hawaii for over 20 years. I have been very concerned about the decline in the fish population on the reef and the health of the reef itself. I am very aware that most people who live in this community use a cesspool for their home sewage disposal. My family did also untion we made the committement to install a tertiary treatment system to ensure that clean water is carried to the reef. Unfortunately this is a very expensive process. The citizens need help to find the best process and they need help to afford what is a very expensive process.

I urge you to support all measures that will speed this process forward and keep this beautiful state health and environmentally sustainable.

HB-2626-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/12/2018 10:15:56 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/14/2018 8:30:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Peter Hackstedde | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

The Puako Community is in full support of this. There are 60+ cesspools near the shoreline in Puako and Wailea Bay. I won't swim or snorkel in the ocean if I have a cut or bug bite, because it may get infected. You should not have to take anti biotics because you swim or snorkel in Puako !

HB-2626-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/12/2018 7:15:39 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/14/2018 8:30:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| David Henderson | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

As a Puako resident on Hawai'i Island and Hawai'i state voter, I strongly support this bill. We have a duty to our children, and their children, to do all we can to stop degrading our environment. Cesspools close to sensitive areas have a negative impact. Please vote yes.

Mahalo

David Henderson

HB-2626-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/12/2018 11:17:56 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/14/2018 8:30:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| George Fry | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

My Name is George Fry and I live at 137 Puako Beach Drive. I've lived in the community for over 15 years and have served on the Puako Community Association Board. Clean water and a healthy reef is a main priority for our community. It should be a priority for the state. HB2626 would confirm the need for cesspool replacement and hopefully establish a methodology to make replacement happen. I support HB2626.

Thank you.

HB-2626-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/12/2018 5:02:53 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/14/2018 8:30:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| candace christensen | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

I have been swimming in Puako for a long time and have seen a precipitous decline in the health of the coral reef in Puako. Cleaning up the wastewater in Puako will help the coral reef and save it for future generations

HB-2626-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/12/2018 11:12:04 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/14/2018 8:30:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Megan Fox | Malama Kauaâ€œi | Support | No |

Comments:

HB-2626-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/12/2018 3:24:20 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/14/2018 8:30:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Steve Gaudino | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

Dear sirs,

I wish to add my support to a program allowing for low interest loans for required upgrades and/or conversions for Puako Cesspools.

Thank you for your attention to this important health matter.

Sincerely

Steve Gaudino, Puako Property Owner.

HB-2626-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/12/2018 11:32:56 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/14/2018 8:30:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| karen anderson | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

Hello, I have owned a home in Puako for five years. When we moved to Hawaii we chose Puako because we wanted our children growing up next to the ocean so that they would develop a close relationship between earth's natural resources and humankind. It is a wonderful community that works together to keep it safe and healthy for community members and the numerous visitors who stay in Puako, and on whom so many of us depend economically.

Our community has spent 10 years and approximately \$2.5M researching the sewage problem and developing a variety of solutions with accompanying cost benefit analyses. We are committed to solving this problem not only for ourselves but also for our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. Right now I will not let my children swim in the waters of Puako or Wailea Bay if we have had a hard rain or if it has been stagnate for several days in a row due to the high levels of pollutants in the water.

As the former state director of The Nature Conservancy in WA state, I know how difficult it is for states to solve their clean water issues. But I also know how important it is for the health and economy of a state. I urge the legislators of the beautiful state of Hawaii, to pass this bill, and to follow the lead of state's like Washington that is tackling the Puget Sound and Maryland that is tackling Chesapeake Bay, to commit the resources to implement long term waste treatment facilities around the island chain's shore lines. Puako is a community that has proved it is ready to partner with you. We have committed to the science. We have invested our own time. We have invested our own money. Please join us in this cause and allow me to stop saying to my children, "No, you can't go to the beach today, too much pollution."

Thank you, Karen Anderson

HB-2626-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/12/2018 10:23:15 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/14/2018 8:30:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Nann Hylton | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

This is Nann Hylton, 69-1644 Puako Beach Drive, Kamuela HI 96743

Aloha and thank you for considering my testimony.

Cleaning up our island water is of the utmost importance. I understand that a cesspool conversion study is an important step along the way to getting the old cesspools converted.

Please approve the study so we can go on to the next step in replacing the old toxic systems.

Thank you so much for adding my testimony, our future generations are counting on us!

Nann

HB-2626-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/13/2018 4:26:38 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/14/2018 8:30:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Natalie Wohner | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

LATE

HB-2626-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/13/2018 7:17:22 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/14/2018 8:30:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Javier Mendez-Alvarez | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:



O'ahu
Chapter

[Surfrider Foundation O'ahu Chapter](#)

[Web: oahu.surfrider.org](http://oahu.surfrider.org)

[Contact: rbergstrom@surfrider.org](mailto:rbergstrom@surfrider.org)

[Mail: P.O. BOX 283092 Honolulu, HI, 96828](#)

LATE

HB2626: In Support

DATE: Wednesday, February 14, 2018

TIME: 8:30 a.m.

PLACE: Conference Room 329

Aloha Chair Mizuno & Members of the House Committee on Health and Human Services,

Of NOTE: In Section 5 there seems to be a typo that instead of 2018, it reads 2118 as the implementation date.

As the O'ahu Chapter Coordinator of the Surfrider Foundation, I am writing in strong support of HB2626, the bill requiring a Cesspool working group to better understand the mechanisms for upgrades of these archaic and environmentally destructive waste disposal systems. Since the passage of Act 120 two years ago, there have only been a handful of cesspool upgrades, and we are working with the Hawaii Dept. of Health (DOH) to improve their public outreach and community involvement.

Non-point source discharge from cesspools in Hawaii is a serious threat to our water quality, and this bill would create a working group to come up with the best ways to do cesspool upgrades, conversions or connections to sewer lines. With about 88,000 across the state, Hawaii has the highest number of cesspools in the country, and many pose a threat to water resources. These substandard wastewater systems leach untreated human waste, harmful pathogens and nutrient loads into nearby waters. Cesspools are a leading source of water pollution, and their effluent can contaminate drinking water sources, streams and oceans with disease-causing pathogens, algae-causing nutrients and other harmful substances.

In monitoring the water quality of North Shore beaches on Kauai, the Surfrider Chapter there has seen improvement after the replacement of cesspools at Kauai County beach parks and along the Hanalei River, where enterococcus counts at the beach at the Pavilion and estuary decreased approximately 56% between 2004 and 2013. Where sewer connections are not available, septic systems and ATU's are a big step forward in protecting public health and the environment. We helped pass the bill to give homeowners tax credits for upgrading their cesspools within 400 feet of the shoreline, waterways or wells because they are the most dangerous. We hope they will make sure the replacements have some form of aerobic digestion.

Unfortunately, we recognize that the \$10,000 tax credit does not cover the full cost of new septic systems, which can be as much as \$20k-\$30k. So we support creating a working group to study the issue and come up with the best solutions for the state. While we understand that the issue is complicating because of the heavy



O'ahu
Chapter

[Surfrider Foundation O'ahu Chapter](#)

Web: oahu.surfrider.org

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Mail: P.O. BOX 283092 Honolulu, HI, 96828

cost of upgrades, the situation is also of pressing need. Our marine resources and public health are at stake. Ultimately, the science already exists to prove the problem and the precedent has already been set – no other State allows these archaic infrastructure pieces to be used. The reasons are very simple, the uncontrolled release of untreated human waste into our freshwater and nearshore ocean waters is a detriment to all levels of the health spectrum. One very obvious suggestion is to begin charging monthly fees for all cesspool users to fund a cesspool conversion fund. If members of our community pay sewer fees to dispose of their human waste, it seems natural that the members of community who contribute the most to contaminated release of human waste, would also have to pay fees. We understand that there are issues of equity and historical negligence associated with this funding scheme and thus the reason to support this working group.

Mahalo for your time and effort working on this important issue.

With Aloha,

Rafael Bergstrom
O'ahu Chapter Coordinator, Surfrider Foundation.