



LATE

March 28, 2018

**Support for HB2626: Relating to Cesspools
Committee: Ways And Means (WAM)
Hearing: March 29, 2018, 10:50am, Rm. 211**

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran and Members of the WAM Committee,

As the Hawaii Manager of the Surfrider Foundation, I am writing in strong support of HB2626, the bill to hire a third party 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 require DOH to hire a working group 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, especially for low-income folks who can't afford to convert.

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

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HB-2626-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/28/2018 2:40:37 PM

Testimony for WAM on 3/29/2018 10:50:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
june chee	Individual	Support	No

Comments: