



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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**Testimony COMMENTING on HB2196
RELATING TO WATER QUALITY**

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

REPRESENTATIVE JOHN M. MIZUNO, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Hearing Date: 2/11/2020

Room Number: CR 325

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

4 **Department Testimony:** The Department would like to provide comments for this measure.
5 The Department has authority under rules to request individual wastewater system pumping
6 records from all wastewater haulers and pumpers. Chapter 11-62, Hawaii Administrative Rules,
7 Wastewater Systems. This measure in Sections 2 and 3 would expand that to require that every
8 onsite disposal system servicer provide pumping records to the Department.

9 The measure also mentions the need for outreach and the development of a database of onsite
10 sewage disposal systems statewide. Act 132, Session Laws of Hawaii (SLH) 2018 established a
11 Cesspool Conversion Working Group (CCWG) that is administered by the Department, to
12 develop a long-range, comprehensive plan for cesspool conversion statewide of all cesspools by
13 2050. Providing outreach is an important element of the long-range plan. The CCWG is
14 currently working on an outreach plan.

15 The Department does have a database of onsite sewage disposal systems statewide. However,
16 the data needs to be updated and validated. There are over 120,000 onsite wastewater systems
17 statewide and this number increases on a daily basis. A consultant should be retained to evaluate

1 the existing database system, update and validate the data and to determine the resources that
2 will be needed to maintain the system.

3 The Department would support these changes if accompanied by funding sufficient to implement
4 them.

5 **Offered Amendments:** None.

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



February 9, 2020

To: The Honorable Nicole E. Lowen, Chair,
The Honorable Tina Wildberger, Vice Chair, and Members of the HOUSE
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
And
The Honorable John M. Mizuno, Chair,
The Honorable Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair, and Members of the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Re: **HB 2196– relating to On-Site Sewage Disposal Systems**
Hearing: Thursday, February 11, 2020, 8:30 a.m. Room 325
Position: **Strong Support**

Aloha, Chairs Lowen and Mizuno, Vice Chairs Wildberger and Kobayashi, and Members of the Committees,

The HAWAI'I REEF AND OCEAN COALITION – HIROC – was formed in 2017 by coral reef scientists, educators, local Hawaii environmental organizations, elected officials, and others to address a crisis facing Hawaii's coral reefs and ocean – namely, the pollution of our near-shore environment by sunscreens that are literally killing our marine life. We are currently asking the Legislature to pass a handful of very important bills to save our coral reefs – they are bills relating to sunscreens, plus bills on cesspools, plastic marine debris, the climate crisis and sea level rise.

HIROC strongly supports this bill, which would establish reporting requirements for onsite sewage disposal system (OSDS) servicers, provide an appropriation of funds for the Department of Health to conduct outreach regarding OSDS, and a second appropriation of funds for the cesspool conversion working group to compile an updated database of OSDS statewide. These steps are needed to address the serious problem we have in Hawaii with wastewater pollution from on-site disposal systems. This bill will provide needed funding to investigate and demonstrate new solutions. Please pass this bill! Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Alan B. Burdick, for HIROC
Burdick808@gmail.com 486-1018



WAI WASTEWATER
ALTERNATIVES AND
INNOVATIONS

LATE

Feb. 10, 2020

In Support of **HB2196** Relating to Water Quality
House Committees on Energy & Environmental Protection (EEP) and Health (HLT)
Tue., Feb. 11, 8:30am, Room 325

Aloha, Chairs Lowen & Mizuno, Vice Chairs Wildberger & Kobayashi and Members of the Committees:

On behalf of the non-profit WAI: Wastewater Alternatives & Innovations, I am writing in **support of HB2196**. This bill would establish reporting requirements for onsite sewage disposal system (OSDS) servicers, provide an appropriation of funds for the Department of Health to conduct outreach regarding OSDS and compile an updated database of OSDS statewide for the Cesspool Conversion Working Group.

I serve on the Cesspool Conversion Working Group, and this bill would help us gain more valuable data about our OSDS in Hawaii and the extent of our serious wastewater management problems. Hawaii has more than 88,000 cesspools across the state, and these substandard systems discharge 53 million gallons of raw sewage each day into Hawaii's waters. That's like a massive sewage spill every day! Although most of us don't see the effects, this sewage pollution poses serious risks to water quality, human health and the resilience of our coral reefs. Yet Hawaii is one of the only states that doesn't have a central database of our OSDS; so we don't know if they are functioning or maintained at all.

Wastewater Alternatives & Innovations (WAI) is dedicated to protecting our waters and near-shore ecosystems by reducing sewage pollution from cesspools and failing septic systems. Our goal is to help communities and homeowners find more innovative, affordable and eco-friendly solutions to wastewater management. Better sanitation systems reduce sewage pollution and make properties more valuable, while also protecting our groundwater, streams and the health of our coral reefs and coastal areas. Without a central database, we won't know the extent of the pollution or how to fix it.

This bill will help DOH to help collect the data from sewage disposal system servicers and educate these disposal operators and the homeowners about the environmental and health threats posed by sewage pollution from cesspools. It will also help collect needed information from these owners about their needs while offering them more innovative and often more affordable solutions. This bill will make it easier to do that and provide critical information to the Dept. Of Health and the Cesspool Conversion Working Group to help us in educating the public about the need for cesspool upgrades, maintenance of their IWS and our efforts to protect our health, water quality, coral reefs and nearshore ecosystems.

This is a complex bill with many moving parts, and I'm not sure about its timeline or estimated costs. But I do know that the Dept. Of Health needs an online database of all OSDS to record the data about how often these systems are pumped and maintained from the service providers. This database will help the Cesspool Conversion Working Group figure out the extent of the problem and which areas to prioritize in the statewide conversion process. Mahalo for your leadership on this issue and consideration of this bill. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Aloha,
Stuart Coleman
Stuart H. Coleman

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**HUMAN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS COMMITTEE
ENVIRONMENTAL CAUCUS**

LATE

Tuesday, February 11, 2020

**House Bill 2196
Testifying in STRONG SUPPORT**

Aloha Chairs Lowen and Mizuno, Vice Chairs Wildberger and Kobayashi, and Members of the Committee on Energy & Environmental Protection and Members of the Committee on Health:

The Human Environmental Impacts Committee, Environmental Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawai`i, stands in **STRONG SUPPORT** of HB2196. This measure establishes reporting requirements for onsite sewage disposal system (OSDS) servicers. It appropriates funds for DOH to conduct outreach regarding OSDS and it requires and appropriates funds for the cesspool conversion working group to compile an updated database of OSDS statewide.

This measure is reasonable and justifiable considering the 88,000 existing cesspools within the State of Hawai`i making Hawai`i the number one state in the nation with the greatest number of cesspools per capita than any other state in the Union. This measure is necessary to assist in meeting the legally mandated cesspool conversion requirement by 2050.

In May 5, 2018, at the O`ahu County Democrats Convention, out of dire concern for the continuous environmental damage and immediate future risk to the environment, to human life, and to wildlife and marine life, as already witnessed by the environmental demise of Kane`ohe Bay, and illnesses and sores suffered by individuals who live, swim, play, fish, pick limu, and boat in Kane`ohe Bay through staphylococcus aureus and other bacterial skin infections, and MRSA, the Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (resistant to many antibiotics); and in Upcountry Maui, where its drinking water aquifer is at-risk of fecal coliform bacteria contamination from human sewage, the following OCC Resolution was adopted:

OC 2018-5. Urging Cesspool Abatement Measures

Whereas, Thousands of cesspools throughout the islands are threatening drinking water supplies, coral reefs and the health of the people who swim, surf, and consume the marine life in popular places; and

Whereas, This is a serious public safety issue, environmental problem and economic danger that is exacerbated by the effects of climate change; and

Whereas, The impact to coral reefs affects the state's economy, shoreline protection, recreation and habitat for important marine life; and

Whereas, Coral reefs around the state, including Kahalu'u Lagoon and Diamond Head on O'ahu, are threatened as cesspools overload nearby waters with nutrients - nitrogen and phosphorous - that cause algae to smother new growth; and

Whereas, The State Department of Health estimates \$1.75 billion is needed to replace all 88,000 cesspools around Hawai'i, with upgrades required urgently for about half of them; and

Whereas, Approximately 53 million gallons of raw sewage are being discharged each day into cesspools which are basically holes in the ground for wastewater; and

Whereas, One of highest priority area is in upcountry Maui, where 7,400 cesspools have caused nitrate levels in well water to spike dangerously close to safe-drinking limits; and

Whereas, The other area of the highest priority is in Kahalu'u, on the east side of O'ahu, where there have been incidents of skin infections consistent with sewage-contaminated surface water; and

Whereas, The risk of disease is expected to increase as cesspools deteriorate and become more prone to flooding as sea level rises and storms intensify as a result of Climate Change; and

Whereas, Hawai'i depends on wells for more than 90 percent of its drinking water and the vast majority of homes are near the ocean subject to sea level and water table rise causing an increase in wastewater contamination on healthy sources; and

Whereas, Both cesspools and septic tank upgrades still allow for effluent to leach into the ground into groundwater and into the ocean; and

Whereas, Connecting to local wastewater systems is best; and

Whereas, All cesspools are banned by 2050; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the O'ahu County Democrats of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i urge the Hawai'i State Legislature, in collaboration with the County of Honolulu, to seek cesspools abatement

measures such as connecting to the local wastewater systems to totally eliminate the problem of leaching, coral damage, and wastewater contamination; and be it

Ordered, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the members of the Hawai'i Congressional Delegation, the Governor of the State of Hawai'i, the Lt. Governor of the State of Hawai'i, Hawai'i Legislators who are members of the Democratic Party; the Mayor of the City and County of Honolulu; and Members of the City Council of the County of Honolulu, and the 2018 convention resolutions committee of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i.

For these reasons, the Human Environmental Impacts Committee of the Environmental Caucus, Democratic Party of Hawai'i, supports the passage of this measure to establish reporting requirements for onsite sewage disposal system (OSDS) servicers; to fund DOH to conduct outreach regarding OSDS; and to require and appropriate funds for the cesspool conversion working group to compile an updated database of OSDS statewide.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

/s/ Melodie Aduja

Chair, Human Environmental Impacts Committee
Environmental Caucus
Democratic Party of Hawai'i

HB-2196

Submitted on: 2/8/2020 12:55:26 PM

Testimony for EEP on 2/11/2020 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Andrea Quinn	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Dear Honorable Committee Members:

Please support SB2082. Hawaii is known as the “endangered species capital of the world” due in large part to invasive species. We must do what we can to protect Hawaii's fragile ecosystem.

Thank you for the opportunity to present my testimony.

Andrea Quinn

Kihei

HB-2196

Submitted on: 2/10/2020 11:05:23 AM

Testimony for EEP on 2/11/2020 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
J M PEDERSEN	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

As a professional engineer working with wastewater concerns on a daily basis I strongly agree with the general intent of this Bill. Identifying failing systems should be an immediate concern. Typically the pumper trucks are the first to receive those calls. Data collection and an updating database are key.

Additionally, there is no doubt that owner outreach and assistance when it comes to maintenance of IWS is critical. Historically cesspools here operated with a bury it and forget it attitude. These mandated septic upgrades require the exact opposite approach. They are hands-on. For them to work they need regular maintenance and inspection and pumping. This is not happening and if something doesn't change we will be discussing failing septic systems in the near term.

I look forward to seeing how this Legislature approaches this critical concern.