

STATE OF HAWAII
HAWAII CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION & ADAPTATION
COMMISSION
POST OFFICE BOX 621
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

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Director, OPSD

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Chair, Senate WTL
Chair, House EEP
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Director, Maui DP
Director, Hawaii DP
Director, Kauai DP
The Adjutant General
Manager, CZM

**Testimony of
Leah Laramee
Coordinator, Hawai'i Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission**

**Before the House Committees on
ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
AND
COMMITTEE ON WATER & LAND**

**Tuesday February 13, 2024
9:05 AM
State Capitol, Via Videoconference, Conference Room 325**

**In support of
House Bill 1893
RELATING TO CESSPOOL CONVERSIONS**

House Bill 1893 amends Act 153, Session Laws of Hawai'i 2022, to increase the cesspool compliance pilot grant project grant amount and update a reference. This bill also appropriates funds for fiscal year 2024-2025 and to establish positions to implement the pilot grant project. **The Hawai'i Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission (Commission) supports this measure.**

The Commission consists of a multi-jurisdictional effort between 20 different departments, committees, and counties. Removal of cesspools for all properties within the Sea Level Rise Exposure Area (SLR-XA), is imperative to the health of nearshore waters and for members of the public accessing coastal resources. Removal may not be achievable by 2050 as directed by state law without viable alternatives for replacement. Cesspools on the shoreline and in the coastal zone will be an increasing source of nonpoint source pollution as groundwater rises and coastal erosion accelerates. The Commission's 2022 update to the *Sea Level Rise Vulnerability and Adaptation Report* Recommended Action 6.4 counsels that the State should expand policy directives beyond the existing income tax credits and requirement for removal by 2050. Accelerating the conversion of cesspools of any kind would ensure a more resilient future and safer reefs and waters for kama'āina and visitors alike.

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



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Energy & Environmental Protection
House Committee on Water & Land
Tuesday, February 13, 2024 at 9:05 a.m.

By

Darren T. Lerner, PhD

Director, University of Hawai'i (UH) Sea Grant College Program
School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology

And

Thomas Giambelluca, PhD

Director, UH Water Resources Research Center

And

Michael Bruno, PhD

Provost

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

HB 1893 – RELATING TO CESSPOOL CONVERSIONS

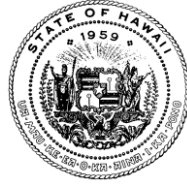
Chairs Lowen and Ichiyama, Vice Chairs Cochran and Poepoe, and Members of the Committees:

The University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program and UH Water Resources Research Center **support HB 1893.**

The Cesspool Conversion Working Group reported that the vast majority of cesspool owners cannot afford the upgrade of their cesspool to an advanced form of wastewater treatment. Because it is critical to both human and environmental health that the state's cesspools be eliminated as soon as possible, it is important that a multitude of mechanisms for financial assistance be created for homeowners. This bill would increase the grant funding amount for cesspool conversions by \$10,000 and would provide salary support for two positions that would support cesspool conversion work in the state. Both of these measures will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the current cesspool conversion program.

We recommend that the reference to the year on Page 2, Line 17 be updated to instead say "in the University of Hawai'i's most up to date cesspool hazard assessment and prioritization tool".

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO
P. O. BOX 3378
HONOLULU, HI 96801-3378
doh.testimony@doh.hawaii.gov

In reply, please refer to:
File:

**Testimony in SUPPORT of HB1893
RELATING TO CESSPOOL CONVERSIONS**

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

REPRESENTATIVE LINDA ICHIYAMA, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WATER & LAND

Hearing Date: 2/13/2024

Room Number: 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 supports this measure with comments that amends
5 Act 153, Session Laws of Hawai'i 2022, to appropriate additional funds for the cesspool
6 compliance pilot grant program for fiscal year 2024-2025 and to establish positions to continue
7 to implement the pilot grant program.

8 The Department notes that increasing the grant amount may cause complications for and
9 issues with homeowners who received or will receive \$20,000 grants from the previous cesspool
10 compliance pilot grant program. Should the Legislature increase the grant amount to \$30,000,
11 the Department respectfully requests an increase of \$10,000, as applicable or eligible, for each of
12 the initial cesspool compliance pilot grant program recipients and participants.

13 The Department also supports the deletion of section 2(h), which required the
14 Department to submit to the legislature a report on the pilot grant project.

15 **Offered Amendments:** The Department respectfully suggests the following revisions to the
16 proposed HRS amendments. Additions appear as underlined and deletions appear as strikeouts.

17 SECTION 2, Page 2, lines 15-18: "The cesspool is located in an area identified as priority
18 level 1 or 2 in the University of Hawaii's 2022 Hawaii cesspool ~~hazard assessment and~~
19 prioritization tool;"

1 SECTION 2, Page 3, lines 10-12: “The owner’s or lessee’s household income shall be
2 verified using ~~the~~one tax return of the two most recent taxable years that is~~are~~ closed.”

3 SECTION 2, Page 4, lines 10-20: “(f) The department of health shall grant awards not to
4 exceed ~~\$30,000~~\$20,000 based on receipts of payment submitted under subsection (e) (4);
5 provided that cesspools that have been upgraded or converted to a director of health-approved
6 wastewater system before ~~the passing of this Act shall not be eligible for this grant~~July 1, 2022.

7 ~~(g) The department of health may adopt rules as necessary to carry out the cesspool
8 compliance pilot grant project; provided that the rules may allow third parties to claim a grant
9 award on behalf of the owner of real property with a cesspool or lessee on Hawaiian home lands
10 with a cesspool.”~~

11 SECTION 3, Page 5, lines 12-14: “~~(1) The appropriation may be used to contract for
12 services to establish and administer the project; and~~

13 ~~(2) ...”~~

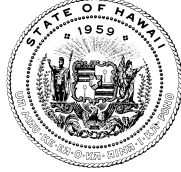
14 SECTION 4, Page 5, lines 18-21 and Page 6, lines 1-5: “There is appropriated out of the
15 general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of ~~\$151,000~~\$249,000 or so much thereof as may
16 be necessary for fiscal year 2024-2025 to establish one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) ~~program~~
17 ~~specialist~~engineer V position ~~and~~, one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) ~~planner~~engineer IV
18 position, and one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) accountant IV position to implement the
19 cesspool compliance pilot grant project established pursuant to Act 153, Session Laws of Hawaii
20 2022, and perform other cesspool conversion-related work.”

21 SECTION 5, Page 6, lines 8-21: “In accordance with section 9 of article VII of the
22 Hawaii State Constitution and sections 37-91 and 37-93, Hawaii Revised Statutes, the legislature
23 has determined that the appropriations contained in H.B. No. , will cause the state general
24 fund expenditure ceiling for fiscal year 2024-2025 to be exceeded by \$ or per cent. In
25 addition, the appropriation contained in this Act will cause the general fund expenditure ceiling
26 for fiscal year 2024-2025 to be further exceeded by ~~\$5,151,000~~\$5,249,000 or per cent. The
27 combined total amount of general fund appropriations contained in only these two Acts will
28 cause the state general fund expenditure ceiling for fiscal year 2024-2025 to be exceeded by
29 \$ or per cent. The reasons for exceeding the general fund expenditure ceiling are that:”

30 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
STATE OF HAWAII
*Ke Kia'āina o ka Moku'āina 'o
Hawai'i*

SYLVIA J. LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR
STATE OF HAWAII
*Ka Hope Kia'āina o ka Moku'āina
'o Hawai'i*



KALI WATSON
CHAIRMAN, HHC
Ka Luna Ho'okele

KATIE L. DUCATT
DEPUTY TO THE CHAIRMAN
Ka Hope Luna Ho'okele

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HAWAIIAN HOME LANDS

Ka 'Oihana 'Āina Ho'opulapula Hawai'i

P. O. BOX 1879
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96805

TESTIMONY OF KALI WATSON, CHAIRMAN
HAWAIIAN HOMES COMMISSION
BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION

AND
THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WATER & LAND
HEARING ON FEBRUARY 13, 2024 AT 9:05AM IN CR 325

HB 1893, RELATING TO CESSPOOLS

February 13, 2024

Aloha Chairs Lowen and Ichiyama, Vice Chairs Cochran and Poepoe, and Members of the Committees:

The Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL) supports this bill which 1) amends Act 153, Session Laws of Hawaii 2022, to increase the cesspool compliance pilot grant project grant amount and update a reference; and 2) appropriates funds for fiscal year 2024-2025 to establish positions to implement the pilot grant project.

Approximately 2,500 cesspools exist on Hawaiian Home Lands. The proposed increase for the cesspool compliance grant amount, from \$20,000 to \$30,000, and the proposed update to a reference to the University of Hawaii's Hawaii cesspool hazard assessment and prioritization tool, will allow for fully comprehensive data and new technology demonstrations that may include the islands of Moloka'i, Lana'i, and Ni'ihau.

DHHL understands that there are approximately 88,000 cesspools statewide that will require cesspool conversion approvals. DHHL supports the appropriation of funds for FTE positions within the Department of Health's Wastewater Branch to support the approval of individual wastewater systems applications, due to the administrative demand that this legislative requirement places on DOH for the 88,000 cesspools statewide. DHHL is also aware that the State currently has a shortage of licensed engineers to execute the design plans and final construction inspections required by Act 125 (SLH 2017).

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony.

COUNTY COUNCIL

Mel Rapozo, Chair
KipuKai Kualii, Vice Chair
Addison Bulosan
Bernard P. Carvalho, Jr.
Felicia Cowden
Bill DeCosta
Ross Kagawa



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY CLERK

Jade K. Fountain-Tanigawa, County Clerk
Lyndon M. Yoshioka, Deputy County Clerk

Telephone: (808) 241-4188
Facsimile: (808) 241-6349
Email: cokcouncil@kauai.gov

Council Services Division
4396 Rice Street, Suite 209
Lihu'e, Kaua'i, Hawai'i 96766

February 1, 2024

**TESTIMONY OF ADDISON BULOSAN
COUNCILMEMBER, KAUAI COUNTY COUNCIL**

**ON
HB 2264, RELATING TO CESSPOOLS
AND
HB 1759, RELATING TO CESSPOOLS
AND
HB 1894, RELATING TO CESSPOOLS
AND
HB 1691, RELATING TO THE ENVIRONMENT
AND
HB 1892, RELATING TO CESSPOOLS
AND
HB 1893, RELATING TO CESSPOOL CONVERSIONS
AND
HB 2738, RELATING TO RENEWABLE ENERGY**
House Committee on Energy & Environmental Protection
House Committee on Water & Land
Tuesday, February 13, 2024
9:05 a.m.
Conference Room 325
Via Videoconference

Dear Chair Lowen, Chair Ichiyama, and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in SUPPORT of HB 2264, Relating to Cesspools, HB 1759, Relating to Cesspools, HB 1894, Relating to Cesspools, HB 1691, Relating to the Environment, HB 1892, Relating to Cesspools, HB 1893, Relating to Cesspool Conversions, and HB 2738, Relating to Renewable Energy. My testimony is submitted in my individual capacity as a member of the Kaua'i County Council.

I wholeheartedly support the intent of HB 2264, HB 1759, HB 1894, HB 1691, HB 1892, HB 1893, and HB 2738, which would greatly affect the Kaua'i community.

Thank you again for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2264, HB 1759, HB 1894, HB 1691, HB 1892, HB 1893, and HB 2738. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or Council Services Staff at (808) 241-4188 or via email to cokcouncil@kauai.gov.

Sincerely,

ADDISON BULOSAN
Councilmember, Kaua'i County Council

AAO:ss

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the committee,

Hulu Mamo Hawaiian Civic Club stands in support of HB1893.

Hulu Mamo Hawaiian Civic Club appreciates this grant program and the fact that this allows DHHL lessees, especially those with a household income of less than 140% AMI, helping those that really need the funds to have be able to convert their cesspools into something more environmentally friendly.

We do also want to note that while this grant program does help those in need, it still misses one critical component, those who can't afford to cover the initial costs of the cesspool conversion and wait to be reimbursed. Many in Hawaii are living paycheck-to-paycheck and are not able to cover an extra \$20,000-\$30,000 in expenses and still have money to put food on the table, especially a family below 140% of AMI.

Hulu Mamo HCC suggests an amendment to allow the program to provide a qualifying note that can be provided to the contractor to show that the applicant qualifies for the grant, and that note can be used by the engineer and contractors to execute on the work and receive payment via the grant when the work is completed. This would allow someone without the means to pay for the cost of the work upfront to get the conversion work done.

This idea is supported by the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs and would help many families convert their cesspool, even though they don't have the means to do so by utilizing the grant funds.

Attached is the resolution supporting this idea, passed by the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs on October 21, 2023 at their annual convention in Kālia, Waikīkī, O'ahu.

Mahalo nui loa for your time and consideration.

Keoni Shizuma
President, Hulu Mamo Hawaiian Civic Club

ASSOCIATION OF HAWAIIAN CIVIC CLUBS

A RESOLUTION

NO. 2023 - 36

URGING THE STATE OF HAWAI'I TO CREATE A GRANT PROGRAM THAT WORKS DIRECTLY WITH CESSPOOL CONVERSION CONTRACTORS TO HELP COVER THE COST OF THE REQUIRED CESSPOOL CONVERSIONS UPFRONT FOR THOSE IN POVERTY IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

WHEREAS, the health of Hawai'i's people and quality of Hawai'i's waters are being harmed by pollution from cesspools, in which Hawai'i has more than 80,000 that discharge approximately 50 million gallons of wastewater every day; and

WHEREAS, cesspools are antiquated substandard systems that damage public health pollute drinking water and lower quality water quality in streams, groundwater, nearshore marine areas, and the ocean, where cesspool pollution also harms public recreation and the precious coral reefs on Hawai'i's shoreline, fisheries, and native species; and

WHEREAS, an article from The Maui News from July 2023 stated that 20% of Hawaii's cesspools are less than 0.6 miles from the shoreline, which is threatened by increasing sea level rise and could cause bacteria from cesspools to enter into the ocean; and

WHEREAS, in 2017, the Hawai'i State Legislature required that all cesspools be upgraded to a septic system or aerobic treatment unit are connected to a sewage system by 2050 and directed the State of Hawai'i Department of Health to develop a system to prioritize the upgrade conversion or connection of cesspools based on their impact on public health; and

WHEREAS, there are approximately 83,000 cesspools across the state, many located in rural areas where county sewage lines do not reach properties; and

WHEREAS, according to the Economic Research Service data in 2020, poverty in rural areas of Hawaii where cesspools are more prevalent are much higher than in urban areas of the state where access to county sewage lines are more available (11.6% vs. 8.2%); and

WHEREAS, according to an Anthology Research survey conducted between July and Sept 2022, there was a sharp increase in the number of households pushed below the poverty line (15% in 2022 vs. 9% in 2018); and

WHEREAS, in 2019, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that 14.8% of Native Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders were living at the poverty level; and

WHEREAS, cesspool conversions can cost \$20,000 to \$50,000 per property, depending on the property and other factors; and

WHEREAS, the high cost of living in Hawai'i has already driven many Native Hawaiians to leave Hawai'i, and the cost of a required cesspool conversion could force a family to move from Hawai'i to the continent due to the high costs; and

WHEREAS, in March 2023, the State offered \$5 million in grants of up to \$20,000 in reimbursements to help property owners convert their cesspools, which ran out in two weeks; and

WHEREAS, reimbursements and tax refund programs are beneficial to those who can afford to pay for the cesspool remediation work upfront and be reimbursed after the work is completed; and

WHEREAS, the creation of a grant program that works directly between the state and cesspool conversion contractors, to help cover the costs of the work to convert a cesspool before the work is done, for those in poverty that need it most, would be beneficial to many Native Hawaiian families in rural communities.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs at its 64th Annual Convention in Kālia, Waikīkī, O'ahu, in the malama of 'Ikuā and the rising of 'Olekūkolu, this 21st day of October 2023, urging the State of Hawai'i to create a grant program that works directly with cesspool conversion contractors to help cover the cost of the required cesspool conversions upfront for those in poverty in rural communities; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a certified copy of this resolution be transmitted to the Governor of the State of Hawai'i, President of the State Senate, Speaker of the State House of Representatives, Chair of the State Senate subject matter committee on Hawaiian Affairs, Chair of the State House subject matter committee on Hawaiian Affairs, Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, and all County Mayors.



The undersigned hereby certifies that the foregoing Resolution was duly adopted in the malama of 'Ikuā and the rising of 'Olekūkolu, on the 21st day of October 2023, at the 64th Annual Convention of the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs in Kālia, Waikīkī.

DreanaLee Kalili

DreanaLee Kalili, President



To: The Honorable Chairs Nicole Lowen, and Linda Ichiyama, the Honorable Vice Chairs Elle Cochran and Mahina Poepoe, and Members of the Committees on Energy and Environmental Protection and Water and Land.

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

Re: Hearing **HB1893 RELATING TO CESSPOOL CONVERSIONS**

Hearing: Tuesday February 13, 2024 9:05 a.m.

Aloha Chairs Lowen and Ichiyama, Vice Chairs Cochran and Poepoe, and Members of the Committees on Energy and Environmental Protection and Water and Land:

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. Hawai'i has over 80,000 cesspools that discharge about 50 million gallons of raw sewage into our groundwater every day! HIROC is deeply concerned about the impact the state's cesspools have on Hawaii's marine life, especially coral reefs.

The Hawai'i Reef and Ocean Coalition STRONGLY SUPPORTS HB1893!

This bill is needed now because pollution from cesspools is harming the public health, the quality of Hawaii's waters and marine life, including especially coral reefs, and the State's reputation for pristine waters. Financial assistance is needed to assist homeowners in upgrading their cesspools.

Under Act 153, Session Laws of Hawaii 2022, there has been a pilot cesspool compliance project to assist property owners, including lessees on Hawaiian Homelands, with upgrading, converting, or connecting a cesspool. Grants have been up to \$20,000, available on a first-come, first-served basis to assist low-moderate income homeowners with the costs of converting a cesspool in a Priority 1 or 2 area.

This bill would increase the grant maximum amount to \$30,000, appropriate funds for fiscal year 2024-2025, and establish positions to implement the project.

This bill's changes are needed given that 1) average costs of cesspool conversions are around \$30,000, 2) funding for grants is needed in the coming fiscal year, and 3) the Department of Health needs staffing to implement the project. This bill's funding for DOH staffing appears to overlap somewhat with HB1898 . Part III of HB1892 also appropriates funds for grants, but not the two DOH staff positions.

This bill provides some badly needed assistance in grants for low and moderate income owners to upgrade their cesspools.

Please pass this bill!

Mahalo!

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



TO: House Committee on Energy & Environmental Protection
Representative Nicole E. Lowen, Chair
Representative Elle Cochran, Vice Chair

House Committee on Water & Land
Representative Linda Ichiyama, Chair
Representative Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair

FROM: Lynn Miyahira representing Public Access to SunScreens (PASS) Coalition
DATE: Tuesday, Feb 13, 2024
TIME: 9:05 AM
PLACE: Conference Room 325 & Videoconference

Re: HB 1893

Position: SUPPORT

The [Public Access to SunScreens](#) (PASS) Coalition is a multi-stakeholder coalition composed of public health groups, dermatologists, sunscreen manufacturers, and leading advocates for skin cancer patients. We also support efforts that protect our coral reefs.

We support this measure.

Cesspools are a pressing issue in Hawaii that impacts our health, water quality, and coral reefs. With over 83,000 cesspools in the state, discharging about 50 million gallons of raw sewage every day, immediate action is needed to mitigate their negative impact. Untreated wastewater leaking from cesspools into nearshore waters can cause high levels of nitrogen in the water, which leads to algae blooms that suffocate and cover our coral reefs.

HB 1893 will increase the cesspool compliance grant amount, establishes two full-time staff positions at the Department of Health, and appropriates funds necessary to implement the Cesspool Compliance Pilot Grant Program. All these things are necessary steps to make cesspool conversions more feasible for local families.

Mahalo you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Lynn Miyahira
Public Access to SunScreens (PASS) Coalition

February 13, 2024

The Honorable Nicole E. Lowen, Chair

House Committee on Energy & Environmental Protection

The Honorable Linda Ichiyama, Chair

House Committee on Water & Land

State Capitol, Conference Room 325 & Videoconference

RE: House Bill 1893, Relating to Cesspool Conversions

HEARING: Tuesday, February 13, 2024, at 9:05 a.m.

Aloha Chair Lowen, Chair Ichiyama, and Members of the Joint Committees:

My name is Lyndsey Garcia, Director of Advocacy, testifying on behalf of the Hawai'i Association of REALTORS® ("HAR"), the voice of real estate in Hawai'i and its over 11,000 members. HAR **supports** House Bill 1893, which amends Act 153, Session Laws of Hawaii 2022, to increase the cesspool compliance pilot grant project grant amount and update a reference. Appropriates funds for fiscal year 2024-2025 and to establish positions to implement the pilot grant project.

Hawai'i Association of REALTORS® supports the goal of protecting our drinking water, streams, ground water, and ocean resources. We recognize that cesspool conversion is important to preserve our environment. There are approximately 83,000 cesspools divided into three priorities¹ across the State and to convert 83,000 cesspools by 2050, at least 3,192 cesspools would need to be converted per year. It is crucial that we properly plan and find ways to assist communities and homeowners as resources and manpower are limited, especially on the neighbor islands. Costs will vary greatly depending on resources, labor, permitting delays, property terrain, and other variables.

In 2022, the Legislature passed Act 153 to offer rebates of up to \$20,000 to help homeowners with the costs of conversion. Demand was so great that that \$5 million in grants ran out in just two weeks.² With the high demand of Act 153, HAR supports reestablishing the pilot grant project to help homeowners who are unable to afford to convert without assistance.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

¹ University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program. *Hawai'i Cesspool Prioritization Tool*.
<https://seagrant.soest.hawaii.edu/cesspools-tool/>

² Spectrum News Hawaii. (July 6, 2023). 83,000 Hawaii Homes Dispose of Sewage in Cesspools. Rising Sea Levels Will Make Them More of a Mess. spectrumlocalnews.com/hi/hawaii/news/2023/07/06/83-000-hawaii-homes-dispose-of-sewage-in-cesspools--rising-sea-levels-will-make-them-more-of-a-mess



Feb. 12, 2024

In Strong Support of **HB1893** Relating to Cesspool Conversion
House Committees on Energy & Environmental Protection (EEP) and Water & Land (WAL)
Hearing on Feb. 13, 9:05am, Rm. 325

Aloha, Chairs Lowen & Ichiyama, Vice-Chairs Cochran & Poepoe, and Committee Members:

On behalf of the non-profit WAI: Wastewater Alternatives & Innovations and the Cesspool Legislative Task Force, I am writing in **strong support of HB1893**. This bill would extend the successful pilot program under Act 153 and increase the grant amount from \$20,000 to \$30,000 to help cover the costs of cesspool conversions for low-moderate income households in Priority Areas 1 & 2 across the state that are polluting nearshore waters and killing coral reefs. The bill would also provide funding to DOH to hire 2 FTE positions to help manage the pilot program.

Under Act 125 (2017), all cesspools are mandated to be converted by 2050. To facilitate these cesspool conversions, this bill would provide needed funding for homeowners who couldn't otherwise afford to do so. The pilot grant program created under Act 153 (2022) was so successful that the \$5 million in funding was exhausted in three days! As an amendment, I would suggest the amount of funding be expanded to at least \$10-\$20 million to help more homeowners convert their cesspools. We need to increase the rate of conversions by 10x in order to achieve the mandate under Act 153, and this kind of proven grant program is the best way to do that.

Hawaii has more than 83,000 cesspools across the state, discharging 52 million gallons of raw sewage each day into Hawaii's waters. That's similar to a massive sewage spill every day! Along with threats to public health and drinking water resources, new research in *Nature* shows that this polluted wastewater poses significant harm to coral reefs and the near-shore environment (see also [my article in Hawaii Business Magazine](#)). The people of Hawaii need this law to make sure their wastewater systems aren't polluting the groundwater or nearby surface waters.

WAI is an environmental non-profit dedicated to protecting our drinking water, groundwater and near-shore ecosystems by reducing sewage pollution from cesspools and failing septic systems. Our goal is to help find more innovative, affordable, and eco-friendly solutions to wastewater management and help homeowners with the conversion process. Better sanitation systems reduce sewage and nutrient pollution and make properties more valuable, while also protecting public health and valuable natural resources like groundwater, streams, coral reefs and coastal areas.

Hawaii is struggling with serious sewage pollution problems, and the state has a mandate to make sure all cesspools are converted in the next three decades. This bill will provide the necessary funding and staffing at DOH that is needed to convert cesspools across the state. Mahalo for your leadership on this issue and support of this bill.

Aloha,

Stuart Coleman

Stuart H. Coleman, Executive Director

HB-1893

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 1:58:44 PM

Testimony for EEP on 2/13/2024 9:05:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lu Ann Mahiki Lankford-Faborito	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

strong support especially for residents on DHHL Molokai, the very first homesteads with aging homes.

HB-1893

Submitted on: 2/2/2024 2:02:14 PM

Testimony for EEP on 2/13/2024 9:05:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Barbara Best	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Once we know better means of ridding waste, we must use it.

HB-1893

Submitted on: 2/2/2024 3:44:54 PM

Testimony for EEP on 2/13/2024 9:05:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
John NAYLOR	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

Residents need help to convert. How about some of that Fed infrastructure money?

JN Makawao

HB-1893

Submitted on: 2/4/2024 5:57:33 PM

Testimony for EEP on 2/13/2024 9:05:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dorothy Norris	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support the funding of this important step in getting cesspools converted to a more sustainable alternative for waste removal. Mahalo!

HB-1893

Submitted on: 2/9/2024 8:36:32 AM

Testimony for EEP on 2/13/2024 9:05:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Hilary Smith	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support **HB1893!** Please pass this bill so that low-and-moderate income residents of Hawaii can do their part to protect the coral reefs. Cesspool conversion is an urgent issue affecting the state of Hawaii. Hawaii needs to be a leader, showing the world that we care about our coral and ocean ecosystems.

HB-1893

Submitted on: 2/12/2024 8:03:58 PM

Testimony for EEP on 2/13/2024 9:05:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Barbara Shimei	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

IN SUPPORT