

March 28, 2023

The Honorable Nicole E. Lowen, Chair

House Committee on Energy & Environmental Protection
State Capitol, Conference Room 325 & Videoconference

RE: House Concurrent Resolution 208

HEARING: Tuesday, March 28, 2023, at 10:45 a.m.

Aloha Chair Lowen, Vice Chair Cochran, and Members of the Committee:

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 **strongly supports** House Concurrent Resolution 208, requesting each county to develop a comprehensive integrated wastewater management plan and financial strategy to upgrade or convert cesspools located within its respective jurisdiction by 2050.

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 (48,596 on Hawai'i Island; 14,300 on Kauai; 11,038 on Maui; 1,400 on Molokai; and 7,491 on O'ahu) with only 27 years to meet the state's mandate to convert all cesspools to a Director of Health approved wastewater system. To convert 83,000 cesspools by 2050, at least 3,000 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.

Affordability and financial planning are key. The Cesspool Conversion Working Group conducted an affordability analysis² for homeowners. Based on the analysis, **97% of homeowners would be financially burdened by cesspool conversion costs.** Equally concerning, even with a \$10,000 rebate 82% of homeowners would still be financially burdened. Most homeowners will not be able to afford to do this alone.

Undertaking such a massive infrastructure project will require proper planning across various stakeholders and government institutions, including state and local

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

² Cesspool Conversion Working Group. (2022). *Final Report to the 2023 Regular Session Legislature*. State of Hawai'i Department of Health. <https://health.hawaii.gov/opppd/files/2022/12/Act-170-SLH-2019-Nov-2022.pdf>



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governments. This resolution is an important next step so that we may be able to determine which areas sewer can be built out or where other conversion options are possible as well as to identify funding mechanisms and develop financing strategies to assist with cesspool conversions.

We applaud the state's effort in taking the lead by requiring the counties to develop a comprehensive integrated wastewater management plan and financial strategy to help meet the goal of converting 83,000 cesspools by 2050.

For the foregoing reasons, Hawai'i Association of REALTORS® strongly supports this measure. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.





To: The Honorable Chair Nicole Lowen, the Honorable Vice Chair Elle Cochran, and Members of the Committee on Energy and Environment

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

Re: **Hearing HCR208/HR212 REQUESTING EACH COUNTY TO DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT PLAN AND A FINANCIAL STRATEGY TO UPGRADE OR CONVERT CESSPOOLS WITHIN ITS RETRSOPECTIVE JURISDICTION BY 2050.**

Hearing: Tuesday March 28, 2023, 10:45 a.m., room 325

Aloha Chairs Lowen, Vice Chair Cochran, and Members of the Committee on Energy and Environment:

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.

The Hawai'i Reef and Ocean Coalition STRONGLY SUPPORTS this concurrent resolution and resolution if stronger provisions are not passed in legislation!

Undertaking a massive infrastructure project, such as converting approximately eighty thousand cesspools by 2050, requires proper planning and administration across various stakeholders and governmental institutions, including those of the

counties. Conversion programs take time and require concerted long-term efforts, planning, outreach, and adaptation. Requiring each county to identify its respective infrastructure requirements is an important first step toward successfully upgrading or converting cesspools as required by law.

Accordingly, this concurrent resolution and resolution ask each county to develop a comprehensive integrated wastewater management plan and financial strategy, including where connections to centralized public and private treatment systems are planned, locations where individual treatment systems will be needed, and where smaller-scale cluster treatment systems may be utilized.

We thank the Committee for hearing this important measure! **Please pass HCR208/HR212!**

Mahalo!

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



March 28, 2023

10:45 a.m.

Conference Room 325 and Via Videoconference

To: House Committee on Energy & Environmental Protection

Rep. Mark M. Nakashima, Chair

Rep. Jackson D. Sayama, Vice Chair

From: Grassroot Institute of Hawaii

Ted Kefalas, Director of Strategic Campaigns

RE: HCR208/HR212 — REQUESTING EACH COUNTY TO DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE INTEGRATED WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT PLAN AND FINANCIAL STRATEGY TO UPGRADE OR CONVERT CESSPOOLS LOCATED WITHIN ITS RESPECTIVE JURISDICTION BY 2050

Comments Only

Dear Chair and Committee Members:

The Grassroot Institute of Hawaii would like to offer its comments on [HCR208/HR212](#), which would require each of Hawaii's counties to develop an integrated wastewater management plan and financial strategy to upgrade or convert cesspools in their jurisdictions by 2050.

This resolution is in response to the final report presented to the 2023 Legislature by the Cesspool Conversion Working Group. This report analyzed strategies to implement a 2017 law that called for all of Hawaii's 83,000 cesspools be upgraded or converted to a director-approved wastewater system or connected to a sewerage system by Jan. 1, 2050, excluding cesspools granted exemptions by the state director of health.

The Working Group noted that many properties in rural areas, especially on the neighbor islands, may not be in areas where existing county infrastructure allows for easy conversion and connection to sewer systems.

It also estimated that 97% of Hawaii homeowners with cesspools face a significant financial burden from the conversion costs, with the total costs to replace all cesspools ranging from

\$880 million to \$5.3 billion. Even with a \$10,000 tax rebate from the state, 85% would still face a financial burden.¹

Considering these difficulties and costs, this resolution aims to establish a framework for meeting the 2050 conversion deadline by asking the counties to identify their respective infrastructure requirements, including where connections to centralized public and private treatment systems might be planned, locations where individual treatment systems would be needed and where smaller-scale cluster treatment systems could be utilized.

In other words, this resolution will provide a guide for county lawmakers, the Legislature and other interested stakeholders about the financial feasibility of wastewater plans and possible cesspool conversion strategies.

It is highly likely that the strategies of the counties would differ from each other, but this would give them the opportunity to learn from each other and adopt more innovative, cost-effective approaches.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our comments.

Sincerely,

Ted Kefalas
Director of Strategic Campaigns
Grassroot Institute of Hawaii

¹ [“Cesspool Conversion Working Group Final Report to the Regular Session Legislature pursuant to Act 170 Session Laws Hawaii of 2019,”](#) Dec. 15, 2022, p. 43.