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## A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO WASTEWATER SYSTEMS.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:**

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the health of  
2   Hawaii's people and quality of Hawaii's waters are being harmed  
3   by pollution from cesspools. Hawaii has more than eighty  
4   thousand cesspools that discharge about fifty million gallons of  
5   wastewater into the State's groundwater every day. Cesspools  
6   are antiquated, substandard systems that damage public health;  
7   pollute drinking water; and lower water quality in streams,  
8   ground waters, nearshore marine areas, and the ocean. Cesspool  
9   pollution also harms public recreation and the precious coral  
10   reefs on which Hawaii's economy, shoreline, fisheries, and  
11   native species depend. To protect the public health and  
12   environment, cesspools should be replaced by connecting homes to  
13   sewerage systems or, in areas that are too remote to be feasibly  
14   connected, upgraded either with individual on-site wastewater  
15   disposal systems or cluster wastewater treatment systems.

16           Additionally, maintaining the cleanliness of the State's  
17   waters is a matter of statewide concern that falls under the



1 legislature's obligation to enact laws pursuant to article XI,  
2 section 7, of the Hawaii State Constitution.

3       To address the State's cesspool pollution, Act 125, Session  
4 Laws of Hawaii 2017, required all cesspools to be upgraded or  
5 converted to a septic system or aerobic treatment unit system or  
6 connected to a sewerage system before January 1, 2050, with  
7 certain exemptions. In recognition of other possible  
8 alternative systems, Act 153, Session Laws of Hawaii 2022,  
9 amended the law to instead require that every cesspool in the  
10 State, excluding cesspools granted exemptions by the director of  
11 health, shall be upgraded or converted to "a director-approved  
12 wastewater system" or connected to a sewerage system.

13       The legislature additionally finds it is also critical that  
14 cesspool conversions be affordable for homeowners and government  
15 entities, as traditional individual wastewater systems may not  
16 be the best, most affordable solutions, especially where  
17 substantial excavation and large absorption beds are required.  
18 The costs of such systems generally exceed \$25,000 and can be  
19 even more expensive in some locations.

20       The legislature also finds that new wastewater technologies  
21 and management solutions may improve public health and the



1 environment, especially the protection of fragile coral reefs,  
2 more affordably than some traditional individual wastewater  
3 systems. Technologies that are reaching a commercial scale for  
4 the first time include solutions for individual homes, as well  
5 as multi-unit dwellings, apartment buildings, and entire  
6 communities. At the neighborhood or municipal scale, these  
7 technologies could effectively treat sewage from entire  
8 communities for lower costs than existing technology now  
9 employed in Hawaii.

10 Therefore, new technologies need to be tested in order to  
11 be certified by the department of health for use in Hawaii. The  
12 university of Hawaii's water resources research center has  
13 experience in such testing, and their guidance and studies could  
14 facilitate the department of health's certifications. However,  
15 in order to do such work, the university of Hawaii's water  
16 resources research center would need funding for a full-time  
17 coordinator, administrative efforts, and infrastructure and  
18 equipment costs for testing and analyses.

19 The purpose of this Act is to facilitate the certification  
20 of new wastewater technologies in Hawaii that could reduce the  
21 costs of cesspool conversions by establishing and appropriating



1 funds for a new wastewater system technology testing pilot  
2 program within the university of Hawaii water resources research  
3 center.

4 SECTION 2. (a) There is established a three-year new  
5 wastewater system and individual wastewater system technology  
6 testing pilot program within the university of Hawaii water  
7 resources research center.

8 (b) The university of Hawaii water resources research  
9 center, in coordination with the university of Hawaii sea grant  
10 college program and college of engineering, department of  
11 health, department of Hawaiian home lands, and all appropriate  
12 county agencies, shall:

13 (1) Test new wastewater technology systems and review and  
14 evaluate the affordability, feasibility, and  
15 efficiency of the treatment technologies; and

16 (2) Document, validate, and summarize the various tests,  
17 research, and outcomes of each test of wastewater  
18 systems and individual wastewater systems and submit  
19 results of the tests to the department of health.

20 (c) The university of Hawaii water resources research  
21 center shall submit an annual interim report to the legislature



1 no later than twenty days prior to the convening of each regular  
2 session for the duration of the pilot program and a final report  
3 to the legislature no later than twenty days prior to the  
4 convening of the regular session of 2028. The reports shall  
5 include:

- 6 (1) Information on the new wastewater technologies  
7 reviewed and tested and test results;
- 8 (2) Recommendations on how to improve the efficiency of  
9 the pilot program;
- 10 (3) Whether the pilot program should be made permanent;  
11 and
- 12 (4) Any other recommendations that the university of  
13 Hawaii water resources research center deems  
14 appropriate.
- 15 (d) The pilot program shall cease to exist on June 30,  
16 2028.

17 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general  
18 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so  
19 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and  
20 the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal  
21 year 2026-2027 to implement the new wastewater system and



1 individual wastewater system technology testing pilot program  
2 established pursuant to this Act.

3 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the university  
4 of Hawaii for the purposes of this Act.

5 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

6

INTRODUCED BY:

ZNC

JAN 17 2025



# H.B. NO. 73C

**Report Title:**

University of Hawaii Water Resources Research Center; Wastewater System Testing; Pilot Program; Appropriation

**Description:**

Establishes and appropriates funds for a three-year new wastewater system and individual wastewater system technology testing pilot program within the University of Hawaii Water Resources Research Center. Requires interim and final reports to the Legislature.

*The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

