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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 pollution from  
2 cesspools harms water quality and the health of the State's  
3 people. There are more than eighty thousand cesspools across  
4 the State that discharge, in total, approximately fifty million  
5 gallons of wastewater into the State's groundwater every day.  
6 The legislature further finds that cesspools are antiquated,  
7 substandard systems that damage public health; pollute drinking  
8 water; and lower the water quality of streams, groundwater,  
9 nearshore marine areas, and the ocean. Cesspool pollution also  
10 harms public recreation and the precious coral reefs on which  
11 the State's economy, shoreline, fisheries, and native species  
12 depend. The United States Geological Survey estimates that the  
13 State's reefs provide flood protection to six thousand eight  
14 hundred people and averts \$836,000,000 in damages to property  
15 and economic activity annually.

16       The legislature further finds that, to protect the public  
17 health and environment, cesspools must be replaced by connecting



1 homes to sewerage systems or, in areas that are too remote to be  
2 feasibly connected, upgraded to either individual on-site  
3 wastewater disposal systems or cluster wastewater treatment  
4 systems.

5       The legislature further finds that maintaining the purity  
6 of the State's water is a matter of statewide concern that falls  
7 under the legislature's power to enact laws pursuant to  
8 article XI, section 7, of the Hawaii State Constitution. To  
9 address the State's cesspool pollution, Act 125, Session Laws of  
10 Hawaii 2017, required that all cesspools be upgraded or  
11 converted to a septic system or aerobic treatment unit system or  
12 connected to a sewerage system before January 1, 2050, with  
13 certain exemptions. Recognizing possible alternatives, Act 153,  
14 Session Laws of Hawaii 2022, amended the law to instead require  
15 that every cesspool in the State, excluding cesspools granted  
16 exemptions by the director of health, be upgraded or converted  
17 to a "director of health-approved wastewater system" or  
18 connected to a sewerage system. The legislature notes that it  
19 is critical that cesspool conversions be affordable for  
20 homeowners and government entities.



1       The legislature further finds that new and emerging  
2       wastewater technologies and management solutions may improve the  
3       public health and environment and better protect the State's  
4       fragile coral reefs at a more affordable cost than some  
5       traditional individual wastewater systems. Technologies that  
6       are reaching commercial scale for the first time include  
7       solutions for individual homes, multi-unit dwellings, apartment  
8       buildings, and entire communities. At the neighborhood or  
9       municipal scale, these technologies could effectively treat  
10      sewage for entire communities at a lower cost than existing  
11      technology currently employed in the State.

12      The legislature also finds that new technologies must be  
13      tested in order to be certified by the department of health for  
14      use in the State. The university of Hawaii water resources  
15      research center could facilitate the department of health's  
16      certification process with its experience, guidance, and  
17      research regarding wastewater technologies. To carry out this  
18      task, the university of Hawaii water resources research center  
19      requires funding to establish a full-time coordinator position,  
20      cover administrative costs, and cover infrastructure and  
21      equipment costs necessary to conduct tests and analyses.



1       Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to appropriate  
2 funds to the university of Hawaii to establish a three-year new  
3 wastewater technology testing pilot program.

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

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

12       (1) Test new wastewater technology systems;

13       (2) Review and evaluate the affordability, feasibility,  
14 and efficiency of the treatment technologies;

15       (3) Document, validate, and summarize the various tests,  
16 research, and outcomes of each wastewater treatment  
17 works systems and individual wastewater systems; and

18       (4) Submit the results of each test to the department of  
19 health.

20       (c) The university of Hawaii water resources research  
21 center shall submit an interim report to the legislature no



1 later than twenty days prior to the convening of the regular  
2 sessions of 2026 and 2027, and a final report of its findings  
3 and recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the  
4 legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of  
5 the regular session of 2028. The reports shall provide in  
6 detail:

7 (1) Information on the new wastewater technology systems  
8 reviewed and tested, including test results;

9 (2) Recommendations on how to improve the efficiency of  
10 the pilot program;

11 (3) Recommendations on whether the pilot program should be  
12 made permanent; and

13 (4) Any other recommendations that the university of  
14 Hawaii water resources research center deems  
15 appropriate.

16 (d) The new wastewater technology testing pilot program  
17 shall cease to exist on June 30, 2028.

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



1 year 2026-2027 for the implementation of the new wastewater  
2 technology testing pilot program.

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 31, 2050.



**Report Title:**

UH; DOH; DHHL; University of Hawaii Water Resources Research Center; University of Hawaii Sea Grant College Program; University of Hawaii College of Engineering; New Wastewater Technology Testing Pilot Program; Wastewater Systems; Reports; Appropriations

**Description:**

Establishes a 3-year New Wastewater Technology Testing Pilot Program within the University of Hawaii Water Resources Research Center to test and evaluate new wastewater technology systems in coordination with University of Hawaii Sea Grant College Program, University of Hawaii College of Engineering, Department of Health, Department of Hawaiian Home Lands, and appropriate county agencies. Requires reports to the Legislature. Appropriates moneys. Effective 7/31/2050. (SD2)

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