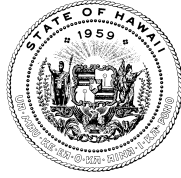


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
STATE OF HAWAII
*Ke Kia 'āina o ka Moku 'āina 'o
Hawai'i*

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



KALI WATSON
CHAIRPERSON, HHC
Ka Luna Ho'okele

KATIE L. LAMBERT
DEPUTY TO THE CHAIR
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, CHAIR
HAWAIIAN HOMES COMMISSION
BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEES ON ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION AND WATER & LAND
HEARING ON FEBRUARY 11, 2025 AT 9:15AM IN CR 325

HB 1404, RELATING TO CESSPOOL CLOSURE

February 10, 2025

Aloha Chairs Lowen and Hashem, Vice Chairs Perruso and Lamosao, and Members of the Committees:

The Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL) **supports** this bill which appropriates funds for a residential sewer connection and cesspool closure subsidy pilot program.

Approximately 2,500 cesspools exist on Hawaiian Home Lands and majority of which are ranked as priority level 1 or priority level 2 cesspools to be upgraded, converted, or connected to a sewerage system. While DHHL understands the urgency to complete these upgrades, conversions or connections, the necessary resources will be vital to meeting these accelerated deadlines.

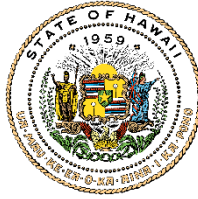
DHHL supports funding to implement the residential sewer connection and cesspool closure subsidy pilot program to assist with planned sewer projects for residents in Ewa, O'ahu and Keaukaha, Hawai'i. Many of which are lessees who reside on Hawaiian Home Lands. DHHL also recognizes that the requested appropriation would be used to provide rebates to homeowners, create a forgivable loan program, or create a program to allow a contractor to claim the funding on behalf of a homeowner.

DHHL understands that there is no simple, one method fits all ahupua'a (land division) solution toward addressing the cesspool conversion and wastewater needs of the State of Hawaii and we especially support funding this residential sewer connection and cesspool closure subsidy pilot program.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA

P.O. BOX 621
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

Testimony of
DAWN N. S. CHANG
Chairperson

Before the House Committees on
ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
and
WATER & LAND

Tuesday, February 11, 2025
9:15 AM

State Capitol, VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE, Conference Room 325

In consideration of
HOUSE BILL 1404
RELATING TO CESSPOOL CLOSURE

House Bill 1404 proposes to appropriate funds for a residential sewer connection and cesspool closure subsidy pilot program. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports this bill.**

Clean nearshore waters are vital to both public health and the health of nearshore reefs and associated fisheries. Cesspools have the potential to pollute groundwater and nearshore waters by introducing elevated levels of contaminants such as nitrogen, phosphorus, and pathogens. A 2023 Hawai'i-based study¹ found that septic and cesspool pollution is a major driver of coral reef decline along the West Hawai'i coastline. By shifting from individual wastewater systems to residential sewer infrastructure, wastewater will be treated to a higher standard, and will not be as detrimental to aquatic resources.

However, the primary barrier to passing legislation for cesspool closure in the past has been the high cost to homeowners. In order to support this much-needed shift that will protect nearshore resources in the state, we need to finance programs that look into the best way to mediate this shift. This bill will support one such pilot program, which we believe will have the benefit of

¹ Gove, J.M., Williams, G.J., Lecky, J. *et al.* Coral reefs benefit from reduced land-sea impacts under ocean warming. *Nature* **621**, 536–542 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-023-06394-w>

DAWN N.S. CHANG
CHAIRPERSON
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT

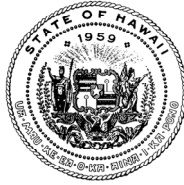
RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE
FIRST DEPUTY

CIARA W.K. KAHAHANE
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

AQUATIC RESOURCES
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT
CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS
CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES
ENFORCEMENT
ENGINEERING
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

determining the most effective way to move forward with cesspool closures while keeping the costs to homeowners low.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this measure.



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

**Testimony in SUPPORT of HB1404
RELATING TO CESSPOOL CLOSURE.**

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

REPRESENTATIVE MARK J. HASHEM, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WATER & LAND

February 11, 2025; 9:15 am; Room Number: 325

1 **Fiscal Implications:** The Department of Health ("Department") requests that this measure be
2 considered as a vehicle to provide this needed funding so long as it does not supplant the
3 priorities and requests outlined in the Governors executive budget request.

4 **Department Position:** The Department supports this measure and offers comments.

5 **Department Testimony:** The Environmental Management Division Wastewater Branch
6 (EMD-WWB) provides the following testimony on behalf of the Department.

7 The Department strongly supports this measure to appropriate funds to create
8 residential sewer connection and cesspool closure subsidy pilot programs to assist with sewer
9 projects nearing implementation in Ewa Beach, O'ahu and Keaukaha, Hawai'i.

10 The Department respectfully requests that the counties of Kaua'i and Maui be included
11 in this residential sewer connection and cesspool closure subsidy pilot program.

12 **Offered Amendments:** None.

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



To: The Honorable Chairs Nicole Lowen and Mark Hashem, the Honorable Vice Chairs Amy Perruso and Rachele Lamosao, 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 HB1404 RELATING TO CESSPOOL CLOSURE**

Hearing: Tuesday February 11, 2025, 9:15 a.m., room 325

Aloha Chairs Lowen and Hashem, Vice Chairs Perruso and Rachele Lamosao, and Members of the Committees on Energy and Environmental Protection and Water and Land!

The Hawai'i Reef and Ocean Coalition STRONGLY SUPPORTS HB1404!

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. We **support protecting coral reefs and ocean water quality by closing cesspools.**

Cesspools are Hawaii's biggest water pollution threat. There are more than eighty thousand cesspools across the State that pollute groundwater and nearshore water and threaten coral reefs and environmental and human health. There is a compelling state interest to close such cesspools as soon as feasible, especially those in priority areas.

Some counties are planning to install new wastewater infrastructure to connect existing homes to county sewers in some areas that currently have cesspools. **Connecting homes to sewers should be encouraged in all areas where this is feasible because it is cost-effective for homeowners and treats wastewater to a higher standard than most individual wastewater systems. Offering a subsidy to homeowners to help cover their cost of cesspool closures will encourage counties to look for and plan more sewer infrastructure expansions in the future, ease the burden on homeowners, and protect the health of Hawaii's environment and people.** Projects under way in **Ewa Beach** on Oahu and in **Keaukaha** on Hawaii Island are good candidates to pilot a

program that offers this type of assistance. Such a pilot program will help determine if such a program should be established on an ongoing basis to help homeowners within sewer improvement districts with their portion of the costs.

This bill would provide funding of pilot sewer projects nearing implementation in Ewa Beach, Oahu (\$12,000,000 for FY 2025-2026 and again for 2026-2027) and Keaukaha, Hawaii (\$6,000,000 for FY 2025-2026 and again for 2026-2027). This funding would assist residents there with rebates, a forgivable loan program, or a program for contractors to claim on behalf of homeowners.

Please pass this bill! Mahalo!

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

HB-1404

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 10:30:40 AM

Testimony for EEP on 2/11/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Douglas Perrine	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

One of the main impediments to converting cesspools to higher level wastewater treatment in our state is the cost to homeowners. HB1404 will help to alleviate that problem. Please pass HB1404.

HB-1404

Submitted on: 2/9/2025 6:27:07 PM

Testimony for EEP on 2/11/2025 9:15:00 AM

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

Comments:

As an avid snorkeler, I support this important bill to help Hawaii families treat their wastewater in a responsible way. The cost of converting a cesspool to a septic system or connecting to sewer lines can be prohibitively expensive for many families, often exceeding \$20,000 per household. A residential sewer connection and cesspool closure subsidy pilot program would provide crucial financial assistance to homeowners, helping protect our water resources while making these essential environmental upgrades more affordable for Hawaii residents.

HB-1404

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 10:13:50 AM

Testimony for EEP on 2/11/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nicolas Storie	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e Chairs Lowen and Hashem, Vice Chairs Perruso and Rachele Lamosao, and Members of the Committees on Energy and Environmental Protection and Water and Land!

I am writing in support of **HB1404 RELATING TO CESSPOOL CLOSURE**. One of the pilot locations, Keaukaha, has been the center of much of my dissertation research examining coastal sewage pollution across the State. Through several methods, we can **undoubtedly state cesspools pollute groundwater in the region**, which quickly travels to our coastal waters, **threatening public and environmental health**. As sea levels continue to rise due to climate change, this issue will only become worse, and we must expedite the conversion of cesspools in priority regions where data definitively highlights the issue. While updating to other forms of on-site sewage disposal systems are an option, connecting households to established wastewater infrastructure is the best way to adequately treat sewage before it enters the environment

Such a pilot program will help determine if such a program should be established on an ongoing basis to help homeowners within sewer improvement districts with their portion of the costs.

Best,

Nicolas Storie, PhD Candidate