

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 HB0734 HD1
RELATING TO WASTEWATER SYSTEMS.**

REPRESENTATIVE KYLE T. YAMASHITA, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

February 20, 2025; 12:00 pm; Room Number: 308

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 a proposed
5 amendment.

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

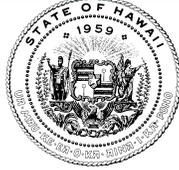
8 The Department supports this measure that requires the Department, in consultation
9 with various agencies and professionals, to review rules and propose changes. Funds are
10 appropriated for the Department to accomplish the scope of this measure.

11 **Offered Amendments:** The Department respectfully suggests inserting the sum of \$150,000 for
12 each fiscal year to hire the consultant as stated in SECTION 3, Page 4, line 14.

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

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 COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
HEARING ON FEBRUARY 20, 2025 AT 12:00PM IN CR 308

HB 734, HD 1, RELATING TO WASTEWATER SYSTEMS

February 19, 2025

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

The Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL) **supports** this bill which 1) requires the Department of Health, in consultation with various agencies and professionals, to review rules and practices and propose changes that have the potential to make wastewater systems and cesspool upgrades more affordable without compromising water quality and 2) appropriates funds.

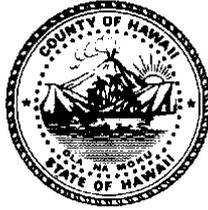
Approximately 2,500 cesspools exist on Hawaiian Home Lands and majority of which are ranked as priority level 1 or priority level 2 cesspools to be upgraded, converted, or connected to a sewerage system. DHHL understands the urgency to complete these conversions and connections before the year 2050. DHHL also recognizes that it is critical that cesspool conversions be affordable for homeowners or lessees of Hawaiian Home Lands and government entities.

DHHL welcomes the opportunity to consult with the Department of Health on its rules and practices and propose changes that have the potential to make wastewater systems and cesspool upgrades in Hawaii more affordable without compromising water quality.

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 stand ready to work collaboratively on this issue.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony.

C. Kimo Alameda, Ph.D.
Mayor



William V. Brillhante, Jr.
Managing Director

Merrick Nishimoto
Deputy Managing Director

County of Hawai'i ~ Office of the Mayor

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KONA: 74-5044 Ane Keohokālole Hwy., Bldg C • Kailua-Kona, Hawai'i 96740
Phone (808) 323-4444 • Fax (808) 323-4440

TO: Rep. Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair
Committee on Finance

FROM: C. Kimo Alameda, Ph.D., Mayor

DATE: February 19, 2025

SUBJECT: **SUPPORT OF HB734, HD1, RELATING TO WASTEWATER SYSTEMS**

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and esteemed members of the Committee,

Mahalo for the opportunity to offer my **strong support** for House Bill 734 HD1. This bill addresses the urgent need to reduce cesspool pollution and protect Hawai'i's water resources. With over 80,000 cesspools discharging millions of gallons of untreated wastewater daily, the health of our residents, environment, and coral reefs is at significant risk.

This measure takes essential steps to make cesspool conversions more affordable without compromising water quality by requiring the Department of Health to review and update its rules and practices in consultation with experts. It also allocates funding to hire consultants to explore cost-effective solutions. These efforts align with Hawai'i's commitment to safeguarding public health, preserving our waters, and protecting critical ecosystems like coral reefs, which provide both environmental and economic benefits.

HB 734 HD1 ensures progress toward sustainable wastewater management while supporting homeowners and communities.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

**Testimony of The Nature Conservancy
Supporting HB734 HD1, Relating to Wastewater Systems.
Committee on Finance
February 20, 2025 at 12:00 pm**

Dear Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Hawai'i and Palmyra supports HB734 HD1, which would require the Department of Health, in consultation with various agencies and professionals, to review rules and practices and propose changes that have the potential to make wastewater systems and cesspool upgrades more affordable without compromising water quality.

Science conducted by TNC and partners has shown that wastewater, particularly cesspools, are detrimental to the coral reefs which protect our coastlines and underpin our economy. Without clean coastal waters reef ecosystems are put at even greater risk in the face of growing global stressors including climate change.

Cesspools cause harm to water quality within adjacent groundwater, anchialine, coral reef systems and fisheries by introducing elevated amounts of organic nitrogen and phosphorus, pathogens, and other contaminants. Contaminants emitted from cesspools can harm aquatic ecosystems by encouraging excess algal and bacterial growth and can also pose a threat to human health. Our research in He'eia, Maunalua, Olowalu, Hana and South Kohala has shown direct evidence of cesspool contamination in streams and coastal waters using a variety of bioindicators and chemical signatures.

HRS11-62 governs our state's wastewater systems and has not been updated in ten years. A thorough review of HRS11-62 would enable proven experts and working professionals to establish new best practices to the guidelines that control how the contaminants are removed from wastewater systems, including critical changes that can make cesspool upgrades cheaper while increasing protections to human and environmental health.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support HB734 HD1.

Guided by science, TNC is a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of the lands and waters upon which all life depends. The Conservancy has helped protect more than 200,000 acres of natural lands in Hawai'i and Palmyra Atoll. We manage 40,000 acres in 13 nature preserves and have supported over 50 coastal communities to help protect and restore the nearshore reefs and fisheries of the main Hawaiian Islands.

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Feb. 18, 2025

In Support of **HB734 HD1 Relating to Wastewater Systems**
House Committee on Finance (FIN)
Hearing on Thur., Feb. 20, 2025, 12:00pm, CR308

Aloha, Chair Yamashita, Vice-Chair Takenouchi and Committee Members:

On behalf of the non-profit WAI: Wastewater Alternatives & Innovations, I am writing in **strong support of HB734 HD1**. This bill requires the Hawaii Department of Health to work with consultants and industry leaders to review and update its rules and regulations to make wastewater systems and cesspool upgrades more affordable and efficient.

Cesspool conversions can be costly, and we need to try to find ways to make upgrades more **affordable**. Following the examples of other states and municipalities, the DOH guidelines for wastewater treatment (HAR 11-62) need to be updated so that they can include more efficient treatment systems, technologies and practices. For instance, Hawaii has some of the highest daily flow rates in the country (200 gallons per day per bedroom), and these inflated rates dramatically increase the costs to convert cesspools.

Hawaii has more than 83,000 cesspools across the state, discharging 52 million gallons of raw sewage each day into Hawaii's waters. Along with threats to public health and drinking water resources, new research shows that polluted wastewater poses significant harm to coral reefs and the near-shore environment. 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 water resources by reducing sewage pollution from cesspools. We support more innovative, affordable, and eco-friendly solutions to wastewater management. Better sanitation systems protect public health and valuable natural resources like groundwater, streams, coral reefs and coastal areas.

Hawaii is struggling with serious sewage pollution, and the state has a mandate to make sure all cesspools are converted in the next two decades. This bill would upgrade the rules and regulations for wastewater treatment and could lower the costs of upgrading cesspools. Mahalo for your leadership on this issue and support of this bill.

Aloha,

Stuart Coleman

Stuart H. Coleman, Executive Director



To: The Honorable Representative Kyle Yamashita, Chair, the Honorable Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair, and Members of the Finance Committee.

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

Re: **Hearing HB734 HD1 RELATING TO WASTEWATER SYSTEMS**

Hearing: Thursday February 20, 2025 12:00 p.m.

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Finance Committee!

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 HB734 HD1!

Pollution from cesspools is harming the health of Hawaii's people and quality of Hawaii's waters. Hawaii has more than eighty thousand cesspools that discharge about fifty million gallons of wastewater into the State's groundwater every day. Cesspools are antiquated, substandard systems that damage public health, pollute drinking water, and lower water quality in streams, ground waters, nearshore marine areas, and the ocean. Cesspool pollution also harms public recreation and the precious coral reefs on which Hawaii's economy, shoreline, fisheries, and native species depend.

Cesspool upgrades are expensive. We need to try to find ways to make them affordable for homeowners and governments. At a time when many residents of Hawaii are struggling to make ends meet, our State **may have an excellent opportunity to save our people money by updating the Department of Health's rules and practices.** Department rules have not been upgraded since 2015.

Administrative rules adopted almost a decade ago currently may exclude some feasible affordable solutions. Updated rules and policies adopted in other states, if adopted by the department, may

improve public health and the environment MORE AFFORDABLY without compromising water quality.

This bill would require that the Department confer with various agencies, professionals, experts, and other states, review its rules and practices, and propose changes that have the potential to make cesspool upgrades more affordable without compromising water quality.

Please pass this bill!

Mahalo!

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



Environmental Caucus of The Democratic Party of Hawai'i

February 18, 2025

TO: Chair Kyle T. Yamashita, Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee on Finance

Hearing Date: Thursday, February 20, 2025 **Time:** 12:00 p.m. **Place:** Conference Room 308 and Videoconference

FROM: Environmental Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawaii

SUBJECT: Testimony in Support of HB734 HD1 - Relating to Wastewater Systems

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee,

The Environmental Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawaii strongly supports HB734 HD1, which requires the Department of Health, in consultation with various agencies and professionals, to review rules and practices and propose changes that have the potential to make wastewater systems and cesspool upgrades more affordable without compromising water quality. Additionally, it appropriates funds for this purpose.

Key Points

- **Affordability:** This bill aims to make necessary upgrades to wastewater systems and cesspools more affordable for residents, helping to ensure compliance with regulations and promoting public health.
- **Water Quality Protection:** Ensuring that upgrades do not compromise water quality is crucial for protecting our environment and public health.
- **Interagency Collaboration:** The bill mandates collaboration between the Department of Health and various agencies and professionals to develop effective and practical solutions.
- **Appropriation of Funds:** The bill appropriates funds to support the review and implementation of proposed changes.

Arguments in Support

Upgrading wastewater systems and cesspools is essential for protecting Hawai'i's water quality and public health. However, the cost of these upgrades can be prohibitive for many residents. HB734 HD1 addresses this issue by requiring the Department of Health, in consultation with various agencies and professionals, to review existing rules and practices and propose changes that make these upgrades more affordable without compromising water quality.

By making these upgrades more affordable, we can encourage greater compliance and ensure that our water resources remain clean and safe for all. The bill also emphasizes the importance of maintaining water quality, which is vital for the health of our communities and the environment.

We commend the Committee for considering this important legislation and urge its passage. The Environmental Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawaii stands ready to assist in any way possible to ensure the successful implementation of HB734 HD1.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

Mahalo nui loa,

Melodie Aduja and Alan Burdick

Co-Chairs, Environmental Caucus Democratic Party of Hawaii



TO: House Committee on Finance
Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

FROM: Lynn Miyahira representing Public Access to SunScreens (PASS) Coalition
DATE: Feb 20, 2025
TIME: 12:00pm

Re: HB 734

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.

Hawaii faces a severe cesspool pollution problem, with over 83,000 cesspools discharging approximately 50 million gallons of raw sewage daily into our groundwater, streams, and oceans. This not only threatens our drinking water but also harms coral reefs that are vital to Hawaii's ecosystem and tourism economy.

Cesspool upgrades are necessary to address this crisis, but they are expensive, creating significant financial challenges for homeowners and governments alike. HB 734 takes a critical step toward addressing this issue by requiring the Department of Health (DOH) to review and update its outdated wastewater system rules, which have not been revised since 2015.

Updating these rules, including adopting practices proven effective in other jurisdictions, could improve public health and environmental protection while also lowering the costs of cesspool upgrades. DOH can collaborate with experts and other states to propose changes that make cesspool upgrades more affordable without compromising water quality.

This bill's focus on affordability, collaboration, and regulatory modernization is essential for solving Hawaii's cesspool challenges. We strongly urge your support for this important measure.

Mahalo you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Lynn Miyahira
Public Access to SunScreens (PASS) Coalition



Date: February 19, 2025

To: Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the Committee on Finance, House of Representatives

Re: HB 734HD1, RELATING TO WASTEWATER SYSTEMS.
February 20, 2025
VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE
Conference Room 308
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street

From: Erica Perez- Program Manager and Head of Sanitation
eperez@coral.org
Coral Reef Alliance (CORAL)

Subject: Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 734 HD1, RELATING TO WASTEWATER SYSTEMS.

I am testifying in Support of HB 734 HD1 relating to wastewater systems on behalf of the Coral Reef Alliance (CORAL) and as a concerned community member of Moku O Keawe. CORAL advocates for cesspool conversion as part of our kuleana to care for the oceans that sustain us and communities that rely on them.

As a member of the State Cesspool Working Group, I can attest to the need for cross-sectoral collaboration. With the appropriate agencies, divisions, NGO's and industry present, we can work with our communities toward a successful cesspool conversion. Cesspool upgrades are expensive. We need to try to find ways to make them affordable to homeowners and governments. We need workforce, inventive technologies, coupled with scalable solutions to safeguard community size conversions. Updating DOH rules and working with the Counties to streamline wastewater projects and policies, will expedite the cesspool conversion and allow us to meet our 2050 deadline.

DOH must confer with experts and counties to propose updates to rules and policies that make cesspool upgrades more affordable, without compromising water quality. CORAL has been working to remove cesspools across Hawaii for over ten years. Coral reefs are essential to shoreline protection for sea level rise, cultural practices, and community



well-being. HB734 HD1 will provide critical regulatory adjustments that will be essential in meeting our goal.

Our coral reefs and oceans are vital to Hawaii's identity and future. By addressing this pressing issue, we protect ecosystems that define our islands and ensure the health of our waters for future generations. The time to act is now—our oceans cannot wait. We are a member of The Ocean Legislative Task Force, a group of over 100 individuals from diverse environmental organizations, working together to safeguard marine ecosystems. Our collective expertise allows us to craft impactful strategies to protect Hawaii's waters.

In closing, CORAL Supports HB 734 HD1. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this important measure,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Erica Perez', is displayed within a rectangular grey box.

Erica Perez
Program Manager and Head of Sanitation
eperez@coral.org
Coral Reef Alliance

HB-734-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 11:33:05 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 12:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

I am the owner of a cesspool in Priority 1 zone. For years I have wanted to upgrade my system for the good of our environment, and now also because I am legally required to do so. However I have not done so because the DOH has not approved any of the systems that would be suitable for my property. HB734 is essential to enabling Hawaii to move forward and finally clean up our wastewater discharges that have been negatively impacting human health and the health of our nearshore ecosystems for years. Please approve HB734 and pass it forward. Mahalo.

HB-734-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 5:15:07 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 12:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jack Kittinger	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments: Please consider passing this important bill which will address a pressing issue in wastewater management and cesspool upgrades.

HB-734-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 8:47:22 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 12:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Betsy Scolnik	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

STOP DELAYING MAKING OUR WATERS SAFE FOR ALL OF US!!!!

HB-734-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 8:58:33 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 12:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lavorn Sparks	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this Bill to help clean up Kauai water quality and make our tiny Island user friendly to our upcoming new generations. Antiquated cesspools are a travesty to our Island State. Your vote can make a difference

HB-734-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 9:08:26 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 12:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Younghee Overly	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you for hearing HB734. Please pass this measure so we can reduce the pollution caused by over 80,000 cesspools. Let's protect our health and environment.

HB-734-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 10:00:14 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 12:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
robin knox	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Robin Knox and I strongly support HB734 HD!. My support is based on my expertise as a Qualified Environmental Professional certified in Water Quality Practice by the Global Environmental Health and Safety Credentialing Board. The current discharges from cesspools are an imminent threat to water quality of groundwater, streams, and ocean water and to both environmental and public health. The traditional technologies currently approved by DOH, primarily replacing cesspools with septic tank systems, is not effective in mitigating the untreated sewage discharges from cesspools from either a water quality or logistical feasibility standpoint. Alternative technologies exist, and are being developed everyday, that provide greater degree of waste treatment, are more cost-effective, and requiring less invasive ground disturbing activity than septic tanks. Supporting DOH in vetting alternative technologies is essential to protecting Hawaii's water quality and reaching the goal of cesspool elimination by 2050. Approving alternative technologies that are more cost effective and logistiically feasible will provide greater pollutant reduction and improved water quality in the shortest time frame possible. As an added bonus, embracing new technologies will be a form of economic development for Hawaii's environmental and engineering businesses and result in exportable expertise that can continue to support our economy long after our cesspools are eliminated.

HB-734-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 11:02:52 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 12:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jay Henderson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I live in Ala Moana area and I support this bill because it reduces the pollution caused by cesspools that discharge 50 million gallons of wastewater daily, protecting groundwater, drinking water, and coral reefs.

HB-734-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 11:39:50 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 12:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
stuart a. scolnik	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, my neighbor has a garage along the moloaa stream. She has turned the garage into a house. The sewage from the toilet goes into the river. There is no septic there is no cess pool. I've made phone calls and emails to local state and federal officials. I have repeated the calls and emails with no effect. It appears that nobody gives a crap. Our well water tests for e coli were very positive. Please do something.

HB-734-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 11:53:07 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 12:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michael Becker	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support

HB-734-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 1:02:42 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 12:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Arlene Twomey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB734 because it

Addresses Hawaii's Major Pollution Threat: Requires the Department of Health to review and update outdated wastewater rules, ensuring cesspool conversions are affordable while maintaining water quality.

Promotes Innovation and Efficiency: Facilitates the certification of cutting-edge wastewater systems for individual homes, multi-unit dwellings, and entire communities, potentially offering more cost-effective solutions than traditional systems.

Collaborative Approach: Requires UH WRRC to coordinate with the UH Sea Grant College Program, College of Engineering, Department of Health, Department of Hawaiian Home Lands, and county agencies to evaluate affordability, feasibility, and efficiency of new treatment technologies.

Supports Environmental and Public Health: Reduces the pollution caused by over 80,000 cesspools that discharge 50 million gallons of wastewater daily, protecting groundwater, drinking water, and coral reefs.

Secures Funding for Progress: Appropriates funds for the Department of Health to hire a consultant, ensuring expert guidance in shaping affordable, effective wastewater policies.

HB-734-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 1:11:15 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 12:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michael W Schwartz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My property abuts the Moloa'a Stream, which is consistently so polluted as to pose a health risk. Our home uses an aerobic sanitary wastewater disposal system to prevent any of our waste entering the stream, but this is not the case for most of our neighbors' homes. I am fully supportive of any and all efforts to clean up the Moloa'a stream.

HB-734-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 3:05:02 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 12:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lisa H. Gibson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strong support