

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO
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WRITTEN
TESTIMONY ONLY

Testimony in SUPPORT of SB0675 SD1
RELATING TO CESSPOOLS.

LATE

SENATOR DONOVAN M. DELA CRUZ, CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

February 25, 2025; 10:04 am; Room Number: 211

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 with proposed amendments.

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

7 The Department appreciates that this measure creates a new cesspool conversion
8 section within the Department’s WWB and appropriates moneys for three (3) full-time
9 equivalent (FTE) permanent positions (i.e., two (2) Engineer III positions and one (1)
10 Accountant IV position). In addition to the six (6) tasks described in the proposed measure at
11 Section 2, Page 3, lines 4-16, the positions would implement the Hawai’i Cesspool Compliance
12 Pilot Grant Program. The duties and responsibilities of these positions for the Pilot Grant
13 Program include, but are not limited to:

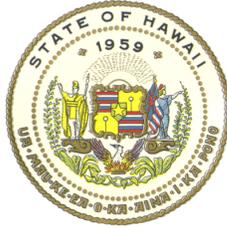
- 14 1) Developing program and outreach material before the launch of the program
15 (e.g., revised application, revised website, revised information flyers);
16 2) Conducting outreach with the public before the launch of the program;

- 1 3) Intaking questions via phone and email and responding with answers;
- 2 4) Intaking of applications;
- 3 5) Reviewing applications, tax returns, property ownership documents and files and
- 4 determining eligibility;
- 5 6) Issuing eligibility letters;
- 6 7) Issuing waiting list emails;
- 7 8) Issuing denial emails;
- 8 9) Managing progress of projects and keeping applicants/grantees on schedule;
- 9 10) Intaking receipts, tax forms, and other financial documents;
- 10 11) Drafting, routing, and issuing grant agreements;
- 11 12) Reviewing receipts, licensed engineers, licensed contractor, licensed
- 12 supply/equipment/materials companies; and
- 13 13) Processing purchase orders.

14 **Offered Amendments:** The Department respectfully suggests the following revision to the
15 proposed measure. Addition appears as underlined.

16 SECTION 3, Page 4, lines 1-8: "There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the
17 State of Hawaii the sum of \$280,000 or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year
18 2025-2026 and the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027
19 to establish three full-time equivalent (3.0 FTE) permanent positions within the cesspool
20 conversion section established pursuant to section 342D- , Hawaii Revised Statutes."

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



STATE OF HAWAII
HAWAII CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION & ADAPTATION
COMMISSION
POST OFFICE BOX 621
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

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Director, C+C DPP
Director, Maui DP
Director, Hawaii DP
Director, Kauai DP
The Adjutant General
Manager, CZM

Testimony of
LEAH LARAMEE
Climate Change Coordinator on behalf of
Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission Co-Chair Mary Alice Evans and
Co-Chair Dawn N.S. Chang

Before the Senate Committee on
WAYS AND MEANS

Wednesday, February 26, 2025
10:04 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 211 & Videoconference

In consideration of
HOUSE BILL 675 SENATE DRAFT 1
RELATING TO CESSPOOLS

Senate Bill 675 SD1 establishes within the Department of Health's Wastewater Branch a Cesspool Conversion Section, which shall be responsible for facilitating the conversion of cesspools within the State. Establishes and appropriates funds for positions within the Cesspool Conversion Section. **The Hawai'i Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission (Commission) supports this bill provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities indicated in the Executive Budget request.**

The Hawai'i Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission consists of a multi-jurisdictional effort between 20 different departments, committees, and counties. Cesspools are little more than holes in the ground that discharge raw, untreated human waste. Cesspools in Hawai'i release approximately 53 million gallons of untreated sewage into the ground each day. Cesspools can contaminate ground water, drinking water sources, streams and oceans with disease-causing pathogens such as bacteria, protozoa and viruses that can cause gastroenteritis, Hepatitis A, conjunctivitis, leptospirosis, salmonellosis and cholera.

Removal of cesspools for all properties within the Sea Level Rise Exposure Area (SLR-XA), is imperative to the health of nearshore waters and for members of the public accessing coastal resources. Removal may not be achievable by 2050 as directed by Act 125, Session Laws of Hawai'i 2017, without financing support for replacement. The Commission's 2022 update to the *Sea Level Rise Vulnerability and Adaptation Report* Recommended Action 6.4 counsels that the

State should expand policy directives beyond the existing income tax credits and requirement for removal by 2050. Cesspools on the shoreline and in the coastal zone will be an increasing source of nonpoint source pollution as groundwater rises and coastal erosion accelerates. The capacity this bill provides is needed to support cesspool conversion and protect our waters.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this measure.

**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair**

**Wednesday, February 26, 2025, at 10:04AM
Conference Room 211 & Videoconference**

RE: SB675 SD1 Relating to Cesspools

Aloha e Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Sherry Menor, President and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce Hawaii ("The Chamber"). The Chamber supports Senate Bill 675 SD1 (SB675 SD1), which establishes within the Department of Health's Wastewater Branch a Cesspool Conversion Section, which shall be responsible for facilitating the conversion of cesspools within the State. Establishes and appropriates funds for positions within the Cesspool Conversion Section.

SB675 SD1 aligns with our 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii: An Economic Action Plan, specifically under the policy pillar for Business Services. This bill promotes policies that drive economic growth, enhance workforce opportunities, and improve the quality of life for Hawaii's residents.

Hawaii's cesspools discharge fifty million gallons of wastewater into groundwater daily, contaminating drinking water, harming marine ecosystems, and threatening public health. Coral reefs, vital for shoreline protection and the economy, provide \$836 million in annual flood protection benefits. To reduce pollution, cesspools must be replaced with sewer connections or upgraded wastewater systems where sewer access is not feasible. Recognizing this as a statewide concern, the legislature seeks action to improve water quality and protect natural resources.

The bill creates a Cesspool Conversion Section within the Department of Health to manage financing, public outreach, and grant programs while coordinating with counties, nonprofits, and private entities. It also funds three full-time positions to oversee conversions. The Chamber supports this bill for its structured approach to cesspool conversion, reduction of environmental and economic risks, and potential to drive growth in wastewater management and infrastructure, fostering a healthier and more sustainable Hawaii.

The Chamber of Commerce Hawaii is the state's leading business advocacy organization, dedicated to improving Hawaii's economy and securing Hawaii's future for growth and opportunity. Our mission is to foster a vibrant economic climate. As such, we support initiatives and policies that align with the 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii that create opportunities to strengthen overall competitiveness, improve the quantity and skills of available workforce, diversify the economy, and build greater local wealth.

We respectfully ask to pass Senate Bill 675 Senate Draft 1. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

SB-675-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 12:55:07 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kaitlyn P Jacobs	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Any measure to aid cesspool conversion is worth it! The sheer amount of raw human sewage leeching into our ground water, and getting flushed into the ocean (at huge amounts during large rain events) is jaw dropping, and its not only hurting our ocean environment but also people who enjoy recreating in the ocean.

I have a friend that got MRSA from surfing at Diamond Head, and I am nervous to touch the water in the Ala Wai everytime I get in my canoe to go paddling. Coral health is decreasing because of nutrient loads being released into the ocean. This is not okay and we should be pushing to get our septic systems to the next level. Thank you.

SB-675-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 11:33:40 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

A dedicated cesspool conversion section within the DOH is badly needed to facilitate the urgent task of converting Hawaii's 80,000+ cesspools. I strongly support SB675, but feel it would be improved by adding another duty to the duties listed in Section 2 to be added to Chapter 342D: (7) Investigate new technologies for individual and neighborhood wastewater treatment systems, and approve those that turn out to be safe and effective for deployment in Hawaii. Mahalo.