



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM
‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony
Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Finance
Tuesday, February 27, 2024 at 12:00 p.m.

By

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And

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And

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HB 1892 HD1 – RELATING TO CESSPOOLS

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program (Hawai'i Sea Grant) and UH Water Resources Research Center **support** for HB 1892 HD1, a comprehensive bill with the following key provisions:

- It sets deadlines for upgrading, converting, or connecting priority level 1 cesspools by 1/1/2035 and priority level 2 cesspools by 1/1/2045, advancing the previous deadline of 1/1/2050.
- It allocates funds to implement the cesspool compliance pilot grant project established under Act 153, Session Laws of Hawai'i 2022.
- It authorizes and appropriates funding for the Department of Health to establish a comprehensive public outreach and education strategy and website.
- It establishes and funds positions for the implementation of the Cesspool Compliance Pilot Grant Project.

The Cesspool Conversion Working Group has highlighted that most cesspool owners face financial constraints hindering the upgrade to advanced wastewater treatment systems. Eliminating cesspools promptly is crucial for human and environmental health, necessitating various financial assistance mechanisms for homeowners.

We support a swift transition and recognize the need for financial support in doing so. Implementation of a compliance pilot grant, with the associated positions to administer

the program, will aid residents in transitioning from cesspools to more advanced wastewater treatment technologies.

The upgrade of cesspools underscores Hawai'i's commitment to public health, recognizing that the well-being of its residents is closely linked to the state's ability to effectively manage and treat wastewater to meet the highest standards of safety. Homeowner and public education regarding the risks associated with cesspools, upgrade requirements and timelines is an integral element of achieving the state's cesspool conversion goals.

Because this bill adds responsibilities for the Department of Health related to the management and implementation of a grant program, our departments encourage the legislature's support of capacity increases at the Department of Health, specifically within the Wastewater Branch, so that they can effectuate their growing responsibilities related to cesspool conversion.

Thank you for considering our testimony on this important measure.