



LATE

March 3, 2017

Strong Support for HB 1244: Relating to Cesspools

Committee: Ways and Means (WAM)

Hearing: March 3, 1:35pm, Rm. 211

Dear Chair Tokuda, Vice Chair Dela Cruz and Committee Members,

As the Hawaii Manager of the Surfrider Foundation, I am writing in strong support of HB1244, the bill to amend the Cesspool Upgrade Tax Credit. With more than 5000 activists and members across the state, the Hawaii Chapters of The Surfrider Foundation supported the original bill upgrade cesspools to better septic systems and aerobic treatment units (ATU). But since the passage of Act 120 two years ago, there have only been a handful of cesspool upgrades, and we are working with the Hawaii Dept. of Health (DOH) to improve their public outreach and community involvement.

Non-point source discharge from cesspools in Hawaii is a serious threat to our water quality, and the suggested amendments in this bill offer a sensible, overdue solution. With about 90,000 across the state, Hawaii has the highest number of cesspools in the country, and most pose a threat to water resources. These substandard wastewater systems leach untreated human waste, harmful pathogens and nutrient loads into nearby waters. Cesspools are a leading source of water pollution, and their effluent can contaminate drinking water sources, streams and oceans with disease-causing pathogens, algae-causing nutrients and other harmful substances.

In monitoring the water quality of North Shore beaches on Kauai, the Chapter has seen improvement after the replacement of cesspools at Kauai County beach parks and along the Hanalei River, where enterococcus counts at the beach at the Pavilion and estuary decreased approximately 56% between 2004 and 2013. Where sewer connections are not available, septic systems are a step forward in protecting public health and the environment. We helped pass Act 120 to give homeowners tax credits for upgrading their cesspools within 200 feet of the shoreline or waterways because they are the most dangerous. We hope they will make sure the replacements have some form of aerobic digestion.

Unfortunately, we recognize that the \$10,000 tax credit does not cover the full cost of new septic systems, which can be as much as \$20,000. So we support the amendments to revise Act 120 to make the tax credit assignable and refundable, expand the criteria for cesspools and extend the sunset date to 12/31/2022. This will also establish a grant program similar to the solar rebate system that allows companies to package the credits and promote the program to cover most of the costs of installation.

Because cesspools pose serious public health and environmental problems, the proposed amendments are needed to make sure that Act 120 and the cesspool upgrade tax credits are successful. Mahalo for your consideration and leadership in dealing with these water quality issues.

Sincerely,

Stuart Coleman



Stuart H. Coleman, Hawaii Manager



SIERRA CLUB OF HAWAII
MĀLAMA I KA HONUA. *Cherish the Earth.*

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Monday, April 3, 2017 1:30 PM Room 211

In **SUPPORT** HB 1244 HD1 SD1 Relating to Cesspools

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Aloha Chairman Gabbard, Chairwoman Baker, and members of the joint AEN/CPN Committee,

The Sierra Club of Hawai'i strongly supports HB 1244 HD1 SD1, which seeks to expand the income tax credit for the upgrade, conversion, or connection of cesspools. In particular, we support the requirement that cesspools be converted to more sustainable sewage management options by 2050. The SD1 version also provides reasonable exceptions to this mandate.

We have 20,000 members and supporters throughout the Hawaiian Islands. Since 1968, the Sierra Club of Hawai'i has been working to protect the unique natural and cultural resources of our islands. We are deeply concerned with water quality and public health issues. Cesspools pose a significant threat to both.

Hawai'i has approximately 90,000 cesspools in the state, which release 55 million gallons of untreated sewage into the ground in Hawai'i each day.¹ Most of these cesspools pose risks to our groundwater, streams, and oceans. With each heavy rainfall, cesspools overflow and contaminate our oceans and streams, and the state must issue brown water advisories. Brown water poses serious health hazards, such as bacteria and viruses that can cause gastroenteritis, Hepatitis A, conjunctivitis, leptospirosis, salmonellosis, and cholera, among other ailments. Contamination not only poses great risks to public health, but also harms endangered and endemic marine wildlife.

Hawai'i has made progress by banning the construction of new cesspools in 2015, but the state still faces the immense public health threats presented by existing cesspools. The current HD1 of HB1244 helps to advance this progress by lowering barriers to the tax credit. Many residents with existing cesspools are unable to transition to sewer or septic tanks because the cost of new construction is prohibitively high. This bill allows more residents access to the tax relief necessary to off-set the cost of conversion. Allowing more homeowners to take advantage of the tax credit program to eliminate their cesspools benefits the health and safety of our whole community. It is imperative that the state moves quickly to reduce and ultimately eliminate untreated sewage contamination to our sensitive environment.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to provide testimony on this important issue.

Mahalo,
Marti Townsend
Director

¹ <http://health.hawaii.gov/wastewater/cesspools/>

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From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Monday, April 3, 2017 11:22 AM
To: WAM Testimony
Cc: sue.leeloy@hawaiicounty.gov
Subject: *Submitted testimony for HB1244 on Apr 3, 2017 13:35PM*

HB1244

Submitted on: 4/3/2017

Testimony for WAM on Apr 3, 2017 13:35PM in Conference Room 211

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Susan L.K. Lee Loy	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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