



**SENATE JOINT COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND
AGRICULTURE & ENVIRONMENT**

Monday, March 20, 2017 1:45PM Room 224

In SUPPORT HB1300 HD1 Relating to Coral Reefs

Aloha Chairmen Kahele and Gabbard, and members of the Joint Committee,

On behalf of our 20,000 members and supporters, the Sierra Club of Hawai'i supports the intent of HB1300, which seeks to study the effect of sewage on coral reefs.

Since 1968, the Sierra Club of Hawai'i has been working to protect the unique natural and cultural resources of our islands. We have worked to prevent and clean up pollution in our nearshore waters due to sewage spills and other forms of water source pollution.

Our aging infrastructure is meeting the demands of growing, increasingly urbanized communities in Hawai'i. As a result, we suffer from frequent sewage pipe failures. In 2016, there were 84 brown water warnings for the Hawaiian Islands, more than 20 of them were for raw sewage released into nearshore waters. This is a public health crisis. More than 90 streams in Hawai'i are too polluted to meet state water quality standards. Nearshore waters on O'ahu, Maui, and Hawai'i Island have nearshore waters that do not meet Clean Water Act standards.

This measure gives the state the resources and authority it needs to better understand the impact of sewage spills on coral reef ecosystems. Such information is crucial to justifying investment in our sewage infrastructure statewide.

We do highly recommend directing the funds to an existing entity that has the expertise and capacity to conduct the study as requested. The Hawaii Institute for Marine Biology is a coral research facility affiliated with the University of Hawai'i system.

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

Mahalo,
Marti Townsend
Director