



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Written Testimony Submitted to the
Senate Committees on Higher Education and
Agriculture and Environment
Monday, March 20, 2017 at 1:45 p.m.

By

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HB 1300 HD1 – RELATING TO CORAL

Chairs Kahele and Gabbard, Vice Chairs Kidani and Riviere, and members of the committees:

The University of Hawai'i Water Resources Research Center (WRRC) was assigned administrative responsibility for the Environmental Center (EC) more than 10 years ago. Over that time, due to budget cuts, retirements, and the passing of one faculty member, the Environmental Center has been reduced to one individual supported on a 50% FTE. This temporary faculty appointment to the WRRC provides instruction for IS 489, Environmental Practicum in its service to the EC.

We agree with the legislature that understanding the environmental impacts of wastewater spills is critical to better protecting Hawai'i's coral reef ecosystems. We respectfully suggest that more important to this end is to understand the critical changes needed in our wastewater infrastructure (and the built environment especially with regard to flood mitigation and control) to prevent such spills (as well as other contaminant and sediment runoff issues that negatively impact coral reef health) from ever occurring. While expertise exists within the WRRC for research and outreach on the infrastructure issues mentioned above, no such expertise has existed from its inception to the present day at the EC (or WRRC) to conduct damage evaluations, identification of diseases, and recommendations for mitigating detrimental effects on reefs and other aspects of research called for in HB 1300. Certainly, the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa has faculty in possession of various aspects of the requested expertise, but these faculty are not members of the EC nor are they affiliated with the EC.

With this understanding, we respectfully oppose HB 1300 HD1.