

BOARD OF WATER SUPPLY

CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU
630 SOUTH BERETANIA STREET
HONOLULU, HI 96843
www.boardofwatersupply.com



December 15, 2021

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Deputy Manager and Chief Engineer

The Honorable Tommy Waters
Chair and Presiding Officer
and Members
Honolulu City Council
530 South King Street, Room 202
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Waters and Councilmembers:

Subject: City Council Bill 48 – Relating to Underground Storage Tanks

The Honolulu Board of Water Supply (BWS) supports the intent of City Council Bill 48, relating to underground storage tanks. This bill amends Chapter 41, Revised Ordinances of Honolulu 1990, by adding a new article 45 relating to Underground Storage Tanks that provides the City and County of Honolulu with the power to issue, modify, suspend or deny any permit to operate underground storage tanks that pose a threat to Oahu's principal source of drinking water.

The BWS believes the 20 fuel tanks at the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility (Red Hill) continue to pose a serious threat to Oahu's aquifer. The recent petroleum contamination from the Red Hill drinking water well and the health threat it poses to the military residents is another example of what could happen to Oahu's community at large. BWS believes the best solution for now is for the Navy to comply with the Director of Health's Emergency Order and to remove the fuel from Red Hill facility immediately. These aging tanks and pipelines are a major threat to Oahu's aquifer and pose a tremendous risk for future contamination.

The Revised Charter of the City and County of Honolulu Article II, §2-102 speaks to promoting the "stewardship of natural resources for present and future generations". Red Hill stores over 180 million gallons of fuel in World War II vintage single-walled underground storage tanks (USTs) just 100 feet above a high-quality sole source groundwater aquifer. Navy documents have revealed of at least 72 leaks from the Red Hill fuel facility. These leaks have continued and pose a significant threat to our water source and the community at large.

Unfortunately, in late November 2021, many military families living at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam that are served by the Navy's water system reported that their potable

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water smelled of fuel and complained of skin rashes, headaches, vomiting and other illnesses affecting families. Initially, Navy officials stated publicly the water was safe to drink before investigating the matter. Water samples were taken by the Hawaii Department of Health and a preliminary testing by the University of Hawaii showed petroleum in the water sample. The Navy's water samples tested in California confirmed the water was tainted. The lack of transparency and accountability is worrisome.

The need to protect groundwater quality and quantity now and into the future outweighs the continued operation of these large field-constructed underground storage fuel tanks at Red Hill. The fuel in the tanks and pipelines should be removed immediately!

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on Bill 48.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ernest Y.W. Lau', is positioned above the printed name.

ERNEST Y.W. LAU, P.E.
Manager and Chief Engineer