

**BILL060(24)**  
**Testimony**

**MISC. COMM. 497**

COUNCIL

## **COUNCIL Meeting**

Meeting Date: Nov 7, 2024 @ 10:00 AM

Support: 0

Oppose: 1

I wish to comment: 2

Name: Robert Gould	Email: bob.gould@stanfordalumni.org	Zip: 96744
Representing: Self	Position: Oppose	Submitted: Nov 3, 2024 @ 12:09 PM
Name: Donald Sakamoto	Email: cylonone@aol.com	Zip: 96813
Representing: Self	Position: I wish to comment	Submitted: Nov 6, 2024 @ 03:26 PM
Testimony: Oral testimony by video conference only		
Name: Lanning Lee	Email: lanninglee@gmail.com	Zip: 96813
Representing: Self	Position: I wish to comment	Submitted: Nov 6, 2024 @ 07:27 PM
Testimony: Aloha. Already strapped families, especially those living pay check to paycheck as I do, are being driven toward homelessness. As a retiree, born and raised in Honolulu, I'm already at the financial edge. Right now, at 70, I'm looking at going back to work so I can stay in my home. Please do what you can to defeat this bill and any others that raise our cost of living to the point of impoverishment.		

Robert A. Gould  
44-365 Kaneohe Bay Drive  
Kaneohe, HI 96744-2664  
November 2, 2024

Office of the City Clerk  
Attention: Information Section  
530 South King Street Room 100  
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear City Council:

RE: BILL060(24) OPPOSED

Bill 60 is an opportunity to rewrite sewer charge rules and make them more equitable and sensible. The current system of charging is frankly dishonest, and that is intentional. People will be much more willing to accept increases in charges if they believe the system to be fair and not a ripoff.

In general I think that wastewater management costs are a core function of any City's government and there should not be a requirement that the division be entirely self supporting. That, of course is a choice made by the City Government, including the City Council.

Until August of 1975 there was no separate charge for sewer at all; the costs were paid via property taxes.

Starting in August of 1975 sewer charges were a flat rate. As a way of capturing usage, a separate base charge was instituted for each dwelling on a property. It was not until 14 years later, in August of 1989, that sewer charges were based on water usage. At that time the ESDU per unit base charge should have been dropped in favor of a base charge based on the number of sewer laterals from a property, since a base charge should be an infrastructure maintenance cost for the sewer lines and connections themselves, not usage. Therefore I propose that the section of the ordinance that says "Single-family and duplex dwellings served by city water system per dwelling unit per month" and all similar refernces be changed to read "Single-family and duplex dwellings served by city water system PER SEWER LATERAL per month" The same change should be made to the section that says "Multiple-unit dwellings and Accessory Dwelling Units served by city water system per dwelling unit per month" to read PER SEWER LATERAL instead of dwellings. That would eliminate the need for the special references to ADUs and Ohana Units, etc.

For actual usage, metered charges make sense, but the current system is unnecessarily complicated and inequitable. The law recognizes that irrigation water (that does not enter the sewer) should be exempted from sewer charges, but the methodology used is flawed. The submeter exemptions are unnecessarily burdensome and inaccurate, and should be greatly simplified. The proper way to charge for metered sewer usage is to meter the water going into the dwelling units, as that is the water that goes into the sewer. Then irrigation water is automatically eliminated, since most sprinkler systems are on full line pressure; not the reduced pressure within a dwelling. Thus a submeter system should be a choice of metering the irrigation water and subtracting it (as there are grandfathered systems) OR AT THE OWNER'S CHOICE to meter the water going into the house and using that to directly charge for usage.

For those who choose not to submeter, the usage charge must be more realistic than the current system of a 20% allowance for irrigation. Other cities use the lowest water usage in the wet season as a base, assuming that no irrigation takes place at that time. That usage is then the base sewer usage, as sewer usage remains very constant, and higher readings are considered to be irrigation in drier season. While not as accurate as actually metering the water going into the houses, at least it is somewhat realistic and fact based than the system in place in Honolulu. Some people with small lots may run a sprinkler system every day year round regardless of weather. People with large lots tend to have more sophisticated systems that use sprinklers as needed or have systems that are automated to take into account rainfall. Those people see extreme changes in water usage for irrigation at various times of the year, and should be credited for irrigation accordingly. People with swimming pools in drier areas see a usage of around 3,000 gallons a month just because of evaporation, and that should be credited as non sewer usage. Each of those groups are currently being unfairly charged.

Again, the current rules are inequitable, dishonest, and unnecessarily complicated. This is your chance to correct a system that is a mishmash of changes and tweaks over the decades.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Bob A. Gould".

Robert A. Gould

(808) 254-5242

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