

BILL060(24)
Testimony

MISC. COMM. 184

BUDGET (BUD)

BUDGET (BUD) Meeting

Meeting Date: Apr 1, 2025 @ 09:00 AM

Support: 0

Oppose: 0

I wish to comment: 2

Name: Tara Rojas	Email: tarahawaiiakai@gmail.com	Zip: 96706
Representing: Self	Position: I wish to comment	Submitted: Mar 27, 2025 @ 10:19 AM

Testimony:

We are ALL being priced out of Hawai'i Nei with these proposed Sewer Fee Increases.

I OPPOSE the 9% x6, 8, 7, 6, 5.

I OPPOSE the 4% x2, 3% x8.

If I am using roughly 2K gallons/month now...the \$84/mo. to \$144/mo. is a HUGE INCREASE.

Mind you, in 'Ewa Beach/Kapolei areas (as well as island & nationwide), our homeowner insurance increased from 40% (mines) to 75-110% increase!!! for others. This equates to Hawai'i people paying JUST ON HOMEOWNER INSURANCE \$500-1100 ALONE. This is separate from the mortgage. Also separate from FOOD, gas, toiletries, car bills, other utilities, etc.

QUESTION: HOW COME YOU JUST DIDN'T INCLUDE AN INSERT/FLYER INTO ALL OUR SEWER BILLS WE RECEIVE?

Only less than 50 people total showed up to the O'ahu Town Halls in a population of over 1,000,000+. = THE NOTICE WAS NOT HEARD BY THE PEOPLE.

I checked the Public Outreach = I only found out at one Neighborhood Board Meeting & was the sole attendee at the last two Town Halls. After walking out of the last Wahiawā Town Hall, I saw that the park was FULL of people and families and decided to ask a couple of families if they knew,...and they replied that they didn't know, thank you for the info., and that they would have attended had they known.

At these Town Halls, the best would have been to have a loud speaker to let everyone know about the Sewer Fee Increase meeting about to take place and/or hold the Town Hall outside in the park it was held at.

I do not have cable and thus don't watch TV. I do not subscribe to the newspapers. Nor do I follow the ENV social media pages. Thus the majority of outreach did not reach me...which is the case for many others.

Again, there needs to be clear reach = send the info. along with the sewer bill AND let people know clearly how their voices can be heard. Give the meeting/presentations scheduled and include the where, what time, how to join.

The Sewer Fee Increase needs to be paused until all of O'ahu knows and can comment. Those who can afford to pay, are not bothered. Those who cannot afford to pay and are struggling, do not know. They are also so taxed that they need to

focus on surviving, this is another element which will 100% affect them. By the way, the \$20-25 dollar assistance IS NOT ENOUGH and is immediately cancelled out by the price of inflation.

We need Public Input.

We CANNOT have this increase take effect 7/1/25.

Mahalo.

Name:

David I. Nagamine

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96816

Representing:

Self

Position:

I wish to comment

Submitted:

Mar 30, 2025 @ 04:05 PM

March 30, 2025

Honorable Budget Chair Tyler Dos Santos-Tam
and Committee Members
City Council
City and County of Honolulu

Dear Chair Santos-Tam and Committee Members:

RE: Bill 60 (2024) Amending Chapter 43 – Proposed 10 year sewer fee increases

Aloha! My name is David Nagamine. I hereby respectfully submit comments to Bill 60 for your consideration.

I am a retired Civil Environmental Engineer, having worked in the City Sewer Division (former name) and ENV for 43 years. As the Assistant Chief of the ENV Office of Administrative Support, I oversaw the Sewer Charge group for 12 years and have extensive experience in City operating and CIP budgeting, bond funding, human resources, City contracting, and other functions. Additionally, I was intimately involved in the ocean monitoring of the Sand Island, Honouliuli, Waianae and Mokapu (Kailua WWTP) discharges for over 20 years.

First, I acknowledge operating the City's wastewater system is very complex and operating and capital costs are very high. Compliance with numerous Federal and State environmental laws and regulations require that operation and maintenance be done correctly and timely. These are my comments:

1. I would like to bring to your attention ROH 43-6.3 (b) below,

§ 43-6.3 Sewer service charge schedules. (b) The department shall review the sewer charge schedule as frequently as may be necessary or proper to comply with any agreements with holders of bonds of the city issued to finance facilities constituting part of the public wastewater system, but not less frequently than annually, and recommend to the council revisions, as necessary, to reflect the actual operation and maintenance costs of the public wastewater system and debt service, reserve and other coverage

requirements on bonds of the city issued to finance facilities constituting a part of the public wastewater system.

The intent of this long time provision appears to be to have ENV review at least annually their operating and CIP costs to ensure that sewer charges are sufficient to satisfy bondholder requirements. On the flip side, ENV should not be establishing sewer charges which result from ENV providing excess cash reserves and coverages at the expense of sewer users. I believe ENV tends to cushion cash reserves and coverages well in excess of bondholder and City requirements. I suggest that the City Council look into this.

2. CIP Cash, which is unused funds from annual bond floats, also needs to be looked at. Annual bond floats have typically raised much more funds that can be expended for CIP projects because of the lack of City staffing to procure CIP contracts and long processing times. These excess funds are then converted to CIP cash, which can be used for other CIP project cost overruns and operating fund "shortfalls". I don't think BFS or the City Council approves the expenditure of CIP Cash. Also, since bond fees are based on a percentage of the bond float amount, City sewer users may be paying bond agents much more in fees than is necessary.

The City Council should not approve a 10-year increase. If Bill 60 is approved as written, ENV may continue to collect sewer fees in excess of revenue needs over the 10-year period. I suggest that BFS hire an independent auditor to do an annual evaluation and then have ENV make adjustments to sewer fees bi-annually if necessary. BFS should be tasked with reviewing the audit and approving the report.

3. The proposed 4-year transition from the current 80/20 Base charge to volume charge to 50/50 in 2029 is not acceptable and should be changed immediately. This ratio has historically been very unfair to sewer users because there is virtually no benefit to lower the monthly bill by saving water. Please revise the bill to change base charge/volume charge ratio to 50/50 immediately.

4. Customer CARE program

The CARE program should be funded by the General Fund, instead of the Sewer Fund. It is unfair that full-paying sewer customers must bear the burden of subsidizing other customers. The cost of the programs should be paid by all taxpayers.

5. Secondary treatment at Sand Island WWTP

The 2010 Consent Decree requirement for secondary treatment at Sand Island needs to be reopened at U.S. Federal Court so the City can show again that secondary treatment is not needed for Sand Island. Resolution 24-287 adopted on December 11, 2024 urges the City Administration to initiate discussions with the EPA, DOH and other parties to terminate or modify the Sand Island secondary treatment requirement. A similar request to reopen the Sand Island Second Treatment upgrade issue was made to the Storm water/ Sewer Advisory Committee in November 2024.

Monitoring of the current less-than-secondary discharge has shown for over 30 years that there is no significant impact to public health or the receiving water environment. UH scientists at the University of Hawaii Water Resources Research Center and local environmental engineers have argued against the need for secondary treatment. Unfortunately, when the consent decree was being negotiated with EPA, Mayor Hanneman agreed to upgrade the Sand Island WWTP with no justification. Capital and O&M costs for the proposed secondary treatment upgrade are the main reasons for such a large increase in sewer fees. If there are any questions, please feel free to call me at 808 439-2457.

Respectfully submitted,



David I. Nagamine, P.E. 3378