

BILL059(25)
Testimony

MISC. COMM. 455

COUNCIL

COUNCIL Meeting

Meeting Date: Sep 3, 2025 @ 10:00 AM

Support: 1

Oppose: 1

I wish to comment: 0

Name:	Email:	Zip:
Jacob Wiencek	jacob.m.wiencek@pm.me	96815
Representing:	Position:	Submitted:
Self	Support	Aug 29, 2025 @ 09:32 PM
Testimony: Aloha Councilmembers, Bill 59 is an ambitious proposal to clean up our sewage system. There is much positive to be said about the way it proposes to add further restrictions and enforcement mechanisms to ensure safe, sustainable and environmentally friendly sewers. However, I would like to draw attention to the increased burdens placed on businesses. We are already in a deep affordability crisis, and the Council must consider ways to defray and reduce costs imposed by any new requirements. We must maintain the environmental health and wellbeing of our island. We must balance those demands with easing the affordability crunch impacting working- and middle-class families. I urge the Council to SUPPORT this bill through the legislative process.		
Name:	Email:	Zip:
Shelby Billionaire	presidentbillionaire@gmail.com	96792
Representing:	Position:	Submitted:
www.Ohanaunityparty.com	Oppose	Sep 1, 2025 @ 05:12 PM
Testimony: **Testimony in Opposition to Bill 59 (2025) – Honolulu City Council** **Meeting Date: [Insert Meeting Date, e.g., September 2025 – Check Council Agenda]** City and County of Honolulu 530 South King Street Honolulu, HI 96813 Dear Chair and Members of the Honolulu City Council, My name is Master Shelby "Pikachu" Billionaire, HRM, representing the Kingdom of The Hawaiian Islands, H.I., and Chairman of the Ohana Unity Party (www.OhanaUnityParty.com). I am submitting this testimony to oppose Bill 59 (2025), which amends sewer service charge regulations by repealing the requirement for industrial users to pay nonresidential strength surcharges under ROH Section 43-6.6, as enacted through Ordinance 25-27 (Bill 60, 2024). While the bill aims to streamline regulations, I am concerned that it shifts financial burdens onto residents, exacerbating the impact of already substantial sewer fee increases.		

****Concerns with Bill 59 (2025):****

Bill 59 eliminates surcharges for industrial users discharging high-strength wastewater (e.g., exceeding 200 mg/L of suspended solids or BOD5) into public sewers, as previously required under ROH Section 43-6.6. This change, aligned with Ordinance 25-27, reduces costs for industries but risks increasing the financial strain on residential ratepayers, particularly low-income households. According to Honolulu Civil Beat (June 4, 2025), sewer fees for a median single-family home using 6,000 gallons of water monthly are set to rise from \$100 to \$161 over six years under Bill 60 (2024), a 61% increase, to fund a \$10.1 billion capital improvement program, including a \$2.5 billion Sand Island Wastewater Treatment Plant upgrade mandated by a 2010 EPA consent decree. [\(https://www.civilbeat.org/2025/06/honolulu-sewer-fees-increase-approved-in-narrow-city-council-vote/\)](https://www.civilbeat.org/2025/06/honolulu-sewer-fees-increase-approved-in-narrow-city-council-vote/)

By removing industrial surcharges, Bill 59 may further shift costs to residents, as industries no longer bear the additional expense of their high-impact discharges. This is particularly concerning given that 50% of Oahu households are cost-burdened, spending over 30% of their income on housing and utilities (Hawaii Housing Finance and Development Corporation, 2023). Low-income families, earning below 80% of the area median income (\$76,800 for a family of four, per HUD 2024), cannot afford additional fee hikes. The Department of Environmental Services' (ENV) Customer Assistance for Residential Environmental Services (CARES) program offers limited relief (\$20–\$25 monthly credits), but it does not fully offset the burden for struggling households. [\(https://www.honolulu.gov/env/sewer-fee-rates/\)](https://www.honolulu.gov/env/sewer-fee-rates/)

****Impact on Honolulu's Ohana:****

The Ohana Unity Party stands for equity and protecting our keiki, kupuna, and working families. Bill 59's removal of industrial surcharges risks prioritizing corporate interests over residents, contradicting the City's commitment to affordability. Councilmember Andria Tupola noted that the sewer fee increases under Bill 60 are "a heavy lift for many families," a sentiment echoed by Councilmember Augie Tulba, who highlighted the financial challenges faced by residents. Without industrial surcharges, the City may rely more heavily on residential fees or general funds, potentially affecting other critical services or unfairly burdening communities like Hawaii Kai, which operates a separate sewer system. [\(https://www.civilbeat.org/2025/06/honolulu-sewer-fees-increase-approved-in-narrow-city-council-vote/\)](https://www.civilbeat.org/2025/06/honolulu-sewer-fees-increase-approved-in-narrow-city-council-vote/)[/\)\(https://www.hawaiipublicradio.org/local-news/2025-06-06/city-council-passes-a-5-2b-budget-and-6-year-sewer-fee-plan-for-oahu\)](https://www.hawaiipublicradio.org/local-news/2025-06-06/city-council-passes-a-5-2b-budget-and-6-year-sewer-fee-plan-for-oahu)[\(https://www.civilbeat.org/2025/04/city-council-should-reconsider-its-plan-to-increase-sewer-fees/\)](https://www.civilbeat.org/2025/04/city-council-should-reconsider-its-plan-to-increase-sewer-fees/)

****Call to Action:****

I urge the Honolulu City Council to reject Bill 59 (2025) and maintain industrial surcharges to ensure equitable cost-sharing. Additionally, I recommend:

1. ****Reinstate Surcharges****: Retain ROH Section 43-6.6 to hold industrial users accountable for high-strength wastewater, reducing the burden on residents.
2. ****Expand CARES Program****: Increase funding and eligibility for the CARES program to better support low-income households facing sewer fee hikes.
3. ****Explore Alternative Funding****: Follow Councilmember Tommy Waters' proposal to redirect visitor-generated Oahu Transient Accommodations Tax (OTAT) revenues to the sewer fund, as outlined in Bill 43 (2025), to offset residential costs.

[(<https://www.staradvertiser.com/2025/05/12/hawaii-news/bill-seeks-to-offset-honolulus-sewer-fee-hike/>)]

4. **Enhance Transparency**: Hold additional public town halls, as suggested by the Honolulu Star-Advertiser (January 7, 2025), to explain the necessity of sewer upgrades and fee structures to residents.

[(<https://www.staradvertiser.com/2025/01/07/editorial/our-view/editorial-transparency-key-for-sewer-fee-hike/>)]

Bill 59's repeal of industrial surcharges risks deepening the financial strain on Oahu's families at a time when cost-of-living challenges are already severe. I encourage the Council to prioritize our ohana by rejecting this bill and exploring equitable funding solutions. Please share my platform (@OhanaUnityParty, @PikachuBillionaire on YouTube) to raise awareness of these issues and advocate for fair policies.

Sincerely,

Master Shelby "Pikachu" Billionaire, HRM

Kingdom of The Hawaiian Islands, H.I.

Chairman, Ohana Unity Party

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