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HB 198

RELATING TO SAFE DRINKING WATER

Statement for
House Committee on Ecology and Environmental Protection
Public Hearing 8 March 1977

by

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HB 198 proposes amendments to Act 84, 1976, the Safe Drinking Water Act. This statement has been submitted for review to the legislative subcommittee of the Environmental Center of the University of Hawaii. It does not represent an institutional position of the University.

Most of the amendments proposed to the Safe Drinking Water Act are mainly editorial in nature. Our comments relate only to proposed substantive changes in cited sections of the Act. In considering the implications of the changes, the meaning of a public water system in the context of the Act must be kept in mind. In brief, a public water system is one that provides drinking water through at least 15 service connections or for at least 25 consumers.

Sec. 2(b)

The public water systems that would be exempt from the safe drinking water standards would be narrowed in that, in addition to meeting other qualifications, an exempt system may not sell water and may not be an interstate passenger carrier. This amendment will have little or no practical effect.

Sec. 2(e)

The 16 December 1977 deadline for prohibiting unauthorized underground injections would be deleted. Federal guidelines regulating such injections are behind schedule, and the State is, in the meantime, regulating them on a case-by-case basis. Hence, the amendment will have little actual significance.

Sec. 6

The Director of Health is mandated, and not merely authorized, to prescribe means for giving public notice of failure by the public water system to comply with standards. This amendment will have little or no practical effect.

Although public assurance that water systems supply safe drinking water to the public is appropriate, Hawaii's record with respect to drinking water quality has in general been admirable. Act 84, passed in 1976, can do little to improve the quality of drinking water, and the costs of monitoring required under it are excessive in small systems. However, there is little that Hawaii can do to remedy the problem, because the requirements are federally mandated. The amendments proposed in HB 198 will probably not significantly either increase or decrease the problem.