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SB 1601
RELATING TO A HAZARDOUS WASTE RECYCLING
AND TREATMENT FACILITY

Statement for
Senate Committee on
Agriculture and Environmental Protection
Public Hearing - February 20, 1991

By
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SB 1601 would set aside approximately 250 acres near Barber's Point airport for a hazardous waste recycling and treatment facility. It would authorize the director of Finance to issue bonds for an unspecified amount to match private funds to establish the facility. Unencumbered state funds authorized in this act would not lapse until June 30, 1994 and the Department of Health is directed to develop the specifications for the project proposals and to determine the types of wastes to be processed at the facility.

Our statement on this bill does not represent an institutional position of the University of Hawaii.

Over the past 4 years, discussions have focussed on the need to reduce quantities of hazardous wastes generated in Hawaii and to provide the means for recycling or disposal of hazardous wastes whose generation cannot be avoided. HB 1601 attempts to meet that need by authorizing funds for the establishment of a hazardous waste recycling and treatment facility. While we can concur with the overall intent to responsibly manage hazardous wastes, the bill as presently drafted appears premature and both environmentally and economically questionable.

From the environmental view, construction of such a facility would seem to send the wrong message to hazardous waste generators. More specifically, it would reduce the emphasis on waste reduction, particularly if the cost of disposal is covered 50 percent by the state. Emphasis must continue to be

in minimization of hazardous wastes. Furthermore, we note that 60 percent of the hazardous wastes generated in Hawaii are generated by the military. If SB 1601 were enacted, the state would be subsidizing the military in the recycling and treatment of their hazardous wastes.

It is our understanding that the necessary waste stream analyses have not been completed. Thus, both the magnitude of the problem and the potential economic costs and benefits that would accrue as a result of this bill are quite poorly defined to date.

And finally, we note on page 3, line 5-8, that enactment of this law "shall constitute approval by the legislature of the withdrawal and set aside of this land and shall void any disapproval by the legislature in the next legislation session as provided under Section 171-11." The rationale for voiding any disapproval by the subsequent legislature is unclear and seems to be unduly restrictive of legislative authority.

Preliminary information brought forth in prior testimony on related bills indicated that the hazardous waste stream in Hawaii is much too small to warrant construction of such a facility. We urge that funds be provided to the Department of Health for a full study of this waste stream and the various environmentally and economically sound alternatives for responsible management. A report to the 1993 legislature of their findings and recommendations should assure better informed legislative action if needed.