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## **PICHTR and WAI Help Access \$1 Million in Federal Funding to Create Workforce Training and Address Hawai'i's Wastewater Pollution Issues**

*Funds will be used to train local workers in cesspool conversion technologies, creating long-term employment opportunities and reducing risks to public health and the environment.*

**HONOLULU — Feb. 1, 2023** — PICHTR and WAI announced that they will receive a \$1 million federal grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to address the serious health and environmental impacts of wastewater pollution in Hawai'i. The funds will go towards the Workforce-4-Water (W4W) program to train the local workforce in cesspool conversion, creating employment opportunities for state residents. Act 125 (2017) requires replacing Hawai'i's more than 80,000 cesspools by 2050 to eliminate the approximately 50 million gallons per day of untreated sewage, which can cause public health issues, harm coral reefs, and pollute groundwater, streams, and the coastal ocean.

The federal funding for the Workforce-4-Water program developed by PICHTR and WAI will help improve water quality in Hawaii by connecting community stakeholders and training workers to promote environmental stewardship, community resilience, and economic equity," said Senator Mazie Hirono. "Besides supporting the health of our people and the natural environment, it will provide long-term employment prospects for many individuals who have lost their jobs or were otherwise economically affected by the pandemic

PICHTR and WAI will work with University of Hawai'i (UH), Hawai'i Community College and Maui College, and the wastewater industry to train 100 workers on new, innovative wastewater technologies that will make cesspool conversions more cost-effective and efficient. This funding compliments the Workforce For Water grant awarded in July by the National Science Foundation Applied Technological Education (NSF-ATE) to HCC and MC for \$1.2 million and intends to develop the post graduate certificate pathway for wastewater workforce.

"We are grateful to Senator Hirono for bringing this cause to the fore and helping us secure this needed funding for Hawai'i," said Dennis Teranishi, CEO, PICHTR. "The Hawai'i W4W project can serve as a model for other US States and Territories facing similar challenges of sewage-related pollution and pandemic-related unemployment. This project was developed under PICHTR's Climate Grants Accelerator, a "one stop shop" support service for NGOs, government entities and businesses wanting to pursue Federal funding for their climate change mitigation, adaptation, and resilience initiatives. PICHTR hopes to work with other partners to develop similarly impactful projects in Hawai'i."

"WAI is dedicated to protecting water quality and reducing sewage pollution from cesspools across the state," said Stuart Coleman, WAI Executive Director. "This federal funding will help provide career training for local workers to convert cesspools and improve water quality across Hawai'i."

PICHTR and WAI will take several actions to ensure the success of the initiative. They will:

- Strengthen the wastewater career pathways system by engaging cross-sector stakeholders to align and create a workforce skill development program that meets the needs of employers in emerging skilled trades and technologies;
- Increase awareness among target community members about urgent environmental and human health issues, relevant government mandates, wastewater-related job opportunities, all in an effort to recruit for training programs;
- Support workers and new entrants to gain skills and transition from unemployment to (re)employment quickly or continue in more advanced certificate, credential program and post-apprenticeship career pathways.

"As the workforce educational resource for our communities, we are pleased on behalf of the other community colleges in our State to partner with PICHTR and WAI to provide the education and digital literacy that these job candidates will require to help lead this environmental transformation of our state," said Rachel Solemsaas, Chancellor of Hawai'i Community College.

"After two years of planning, we are excited to launch this compelling initiative to introduce new sanitation technology and provide training for needed wastewater jobs," said Stuart Coleman, Executive Director of WAI. "With the W4W Initiative, we will be addressing two problems at once: the high unemployment rates resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and the widespread pollution from Hawai'i's over 80,000 cesspools. It's a win-win for the state."

PICHTR and WAI have begun planning for this two-year grant and will engage with cross-sector stakeholders to create a workforce development program that meets the needs of employers in emerging wastewater skilled trades and technologies.

### **About PICHTR**

The Pacific International Center for High Technology Research (PICHTR) is a leader in planning, development, evaluation, and deployment of place-based sustainable practices, with a mission to facilitate the adoption and implementation of these practices throughout Hawai'i and Asia Pacific. PICHTR was established by the 1983 Legislature and originally managed within the University of Hawai'i before being incorporated in 1985 as an independent, Hawai'i-based not-for-profit.

### **About WAI**

Wastewater Alternatives & Innovations (WAI Org Inc or WAI) works to protect water quality, reduce sewage pollution and restore healthy watersheds by providing innovative, affordable and eco-friendly solutions to waste and wastewater management for all people.