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The Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
In support of SB 300: Pesticides – Use of Chlorpyrifos – Prohibition

Chairman Pinsky, Vice Chairman Kagan and members of the committee:

My name is Richard Jefferies, my wife Jean and I own and operate Utica Bridge Farms in Frederick County. We are a chemical-free, experimental farm on 42 acres, employing a range of regenerative practices. We grow over 50 varieties of vegetables, berries, fruits, nuts and grains. Most are heirloom varieties, none are genetically modified. We also raise sheep, chickens, guineas and have a friendly guardian donkey Wilbur who watches over our farm.

We share our experiences and knowledge with other regeneratively minded friends, as well as organizations such as the Bionutrient Food Association, Soil4Climate, the Frederick County Healthy Soils Discussion Group, and Sierra Cub Catoctin Chapter.

We operate our farm on the knowledge that Nature knows best. We regenerate Nature's age-old processes to build healthier soil, grow healthier plants and animals, and yield healthier food for human consumption—while increasing biodiversity above ground and below, improving rainwater capture and reducing inputs. The natural processes we regenerate would be damaged or destroyed by the use of pesticides such as chlorpyrifos, which then addicts the farm to more and more inputs in an attempt to compensate. We have chosen another direction, as have farmers who successfully and profitably farm regeneratively on 6 million acres worldwide, one million in the United States—and these numbers are growing fast.

Like the other 83 Maryland farmers who signed the farmer letter in support of SB 300, we do not use chlorpyrifos and can attest to the fact that it is not needed to produce any of the crops it is applied on in Maryland. This includes the corn, melons, grapes, garlic, okra, tomatoes, peppers, beans, squash, greens, raspberries, silverberries, pears, kiwis, strawberries and cherries we grow. There are plenty of alternative practices and products for farmers to use to address pest pressures, and a wealth of information to back up their efficacy.

Chlorpyrifos is simply too toxic to be going into our food or to be in the proximity of farmers, their workers or their families.

Please give SB 300 your full support, with no weakening amendments. Thank you.

Richard Jeffries