2/12/2020

House Committee on Environment and Transportation
House Office Building, Room 251
Annapolis, MD 21401

IN SUPPORT OF HB 229 –Pesticides – Use of Chlorpyrifos – Prohibition

Dear Honorable members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee,

My name is Erich Pica. I am a resident of Silver Spring, Maryland, an avid golfer and President of Friends of the Earth. Friends of the Earth is an environmental organization that defends the environment and champions a healthy and just world. We have over 2 million members and supporters nationwide and 26,887 members and supporters in Maryland. On behalf of these members, my fellow golfers and my family, I urge you to support and favorably pass HB 229 out of committee to protect public health and the environment in Maryland.

I have been a golfer since junior high and frequently play at courses in Montgomery and Prince George's County including Sligo Creek, Northwest, Little Bennett, Hampshire Greens, Paint Branch and University of Maryland. Recently, I have started taking my young eight year old son with me to teach him how to play golf. I'm extremely concerned that my son Zander and other young children, and the parents that are teaching their kids this lifetime sport in Maryland, may unknowingly be exposed to the toxic pesticide chlorpyrifos. This is alarming because chlorpyrifos can cause brain damage in children,[i] contaminates our waterways and harms wildlife.[ii, iii] This chemical is associated with reduced IQ,[iv] loss of working memory,[v] attention deficit disorders[vi] and delayed motor development.[vii] Just a one-time exposure at a critical stage of fetal development can have a life-long impact, including severe learning disabilities and autism spectrum disorders.[viii] Unless banned or identified, parents have no way of knowing if a course is using this chemical.

In addition to harming children and golfers, chlorpyrifos can harm golf course employees and the families that live on or near golf courses. In fact, EPA found that there are virtually no safe ways to apply chlorpyrifos.[ix] Chlorpyrifos drift can continue at unsafe levels 300 feet from the turf's edge, which means it can harm people living on or near golf courses too.[x] Many of the golf courses in Maryland are integrated into the community. For example, Hampshire Green, which I play, has many family homes located immediately adjacent to the golf course. This means that these families and their children are exposed to chlorpyrifos if this course is using this chemical.

There is no reason for us to be putting our children, public health or the environment in jeopardy. There are safer alternatives that golf courses can use. For example, Kenwood Golf and Country Club in Bethesda, Maryland has stopped using all organophosphate pesticides, including chlorpyrifos and are using safer and more effective insecticides. Kenwood is joined by a number of Maryland golf courses that are not using chlorpyrifos including Eisenhower Golf Course in Crownsville, Compass Pointe Golf Course in Pasadena, Hobbit's Glen Golf Club in Columbia and Wicomico Shores Golf Course in Mechanicsville, and Hunt Valley Country Club in Baltimore. In addition to Maryland golf courses, the Golf Course Superintendents Association noted in its 2017 March magazine that, "If more courses move away from primary reliance on adulticides [like chlorpyrifos], monitoring of larvae will become more important, which could, in turn, reduce total insecticide use. Because highly resistant weevil populations are also more tolerant of — if not resistant to — most of the currently available larvicides, superintendents will also have to start relying more on bio-rational insecticides and cultural means to manage weevil populations." It is really a no-brainer. If there are less-toxic alternatives, they should

be used and chlorpyrifos should be banned. I urge the state of Maryland to take immediate action by passing HB 229 out of committee to make our state safer for people and the planet.

In addition to putting public health, particularly young children at risk, we are also contaminating our waterways including the Northwest Branch of the Anacostia River by using chlorpryifos. Some of our beautiful courses are located close to waterways. By eliminating chlorpyrifos, golf course superintendents will be protecting our Bay and these waterways from the impact of this toxic runoff. As my son and I tour the courses, it is always beautiful to observe wildlife and insects. We've had the pleasure of seeing birds, turtles and even being chased by a fox. However, we are unnecessarily putting these species at risk by using the toxic pesticide chlorpyrifos. Federal scientists have concluded that this pesticide poses a risk to about 1,800 critically threatened or endangered species.[xi] We will help protect them by taking action in Maryland.

While the federal government is unwilling to prioritize people, especially children, over chemical company profits, other states have been leading the way. Hawai'i has passed legislation to ban chlorpyrifos, and just last year, New York and California, the largest agricultural state in the country, banned it as well. As a result of this leadership, Corteva, the largest (but not lone) manufacturer of chlorpyrifos, announced it will cease production in 2021. The state of Maryland has an opportunity to stand up and pass legislation to protect its citizens. As a father, I want to be able to teach my son Zander how to play golf without worrying that he could be exposed to pesticides derived from a nerve gas made in Nazi Germany that could harm his developing brain. No parent should carry this burden.

For the sake of our children and for public health, wildlife and the environmental in Maryland, I urge the committee to ban chlorpyrifos in Maryland now. We must take immediate action before another child or family is exposed to this toxic pesticide simply by playing or living near a golf course.

Sincerely,

Erich Pica

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