

McDaniel Honey Farm
4964 Wentz Road, Manchester, Maryland 21102

February 11, 2020

Chairman Paul Pinsky
Vice Chair Cheryl Kagan
Members of the Senate Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee

Testimony in Support of SB 300: Pesticides - Use of Chlorpyrifos - Prohibition

Mr. Chair, Ms. Vice Chair and Members of the Committee:

I am a professional beekeeper for over 30 years and a Board Member of the Central Maryland Beekeepers Association. I am also Past President of the Central Maryland Beekeepers Association, the Carroll County Beekeepers Association, and the Maryland State Beekeepers Association, as well as certified as a Master Beekeeper (one of about 150 in the U.S.) by the Eastern Apicultural Society. I have a degree in chemistry from Harvard.

In 2017, many of the bees in my hives died on the ground in my apiary. The Maryland Department of Agriculture answered my call for help, and an MDA employee came and collected samples of the dead bees on the ground and the comb inside the hives. The MDA found one insecticide from their tests: chlorpyrifos. The amount was listed as a 'trace' because their test was not very sensitive. The limit of detection--20 ppb--is more than enough to kill a bee. I did not even know that chlorpyrifos was being used on farms in my neighborhood near Manchester, but it appears that chemical likely killed my bees.

Honeybees are far more than just bugs in a box. They are critical to agriculture for pollination of fruits and vegetables. Bees in Maryland are in serious decline. In the last ten years, beekeepers have been contending with unacceptably high losses of 50-100% annually. This is financially unsustainable and county bee associations are experiencing significant attrition as people leave beekeeping after several years of such losses. These losses have a financial impact for the beekeeper, who invests to replace lost hives and then labors all year so the new hive will produce a honey crop the following summer.

I estimate that the deaths of my bees since 2012 have cost me over \$100,000, and I am a small-scale beekeeper trying to maintain about 20 colonies. I am currently down to three, from 18 in September. With losses over 10-15%, beekeeping is a losing proposition that is unsustainable for the beekeeper and ultimately will impact farmers' production and the cost of food. Chlorpyrifos is the second most harmful pesticide for bees and the third most prevalent pesticide found in honeybee hives. It causes brain damage to bees, impairing critical communication and navigation function, and harms reproduction.

Chlorpyrifos is a deadly poison, chemically similar to nerve gas. It is an act of desperation to use it on a farm, as there are many other options that are not as toxic. In my opinion, it should never have been allowed to be sold in the first place, especially considering the severe damage it does to people's nervous systems. Children are especially sensitive to it, and many kids now suffer from learning disabilities that may have been avoided. The EPA studied it for many years and made the decision to ban it nationally, which was overturned by the current administration. For decades, it has been killing bees and harming people because the EPA did not do its job of protecting the environment, the bees, and us. It is now up to you to do their job for them by banning the use and sale of chlorpyrifos in Maryland. It is only one state, but it is our state. Please support HB 229.

Thank you,
Stephen McDaniel