MARYLAND STATE PEST CONTROL ASSOCIATION

March 2, 2020

Re: MSPCA Opposition to Increasing the Cost of Managing Bed Bugs, Cockroaches, Rodents, and Adapting to Climate Change in Maryland (Oppose HB 1628)

Dear Chairwoman Kaiser, Vice-Chairs Walker and Washington, and Delegates of the House Ways and Means Committee:

I'm Andrea Brubaker, the President of the Maryland State Pest Control Association (MSPCA) the only trade group for structural pest management companies or "pest control" companies in Maryland. We appreciate the opportunity to testify before you regarding our opposition to taxing pest control services.

MSPCA urges you to not apply the sales tax to structural pest control services in HB 1628. For example, this bill will increase the cost of eradicating bed bugs in hotels, cockroaches and rodents in restaurant kitchens, mosquitoes and ticks in Maryland backyards, and termites from damaging Maryland homes.

Applying the sales tax to vital pest control services will increase the cost of protecting public health and property, discourage food establishments and restaurants from using professional pest control, and make it more costly to adapt to climate change, as the *Fourth National Climate Assessment* projects a substantial increase in mosquitoes and mosquito-borne diseases such as West Nile virus, and ticks and tick-borne diseases such as Lyme disease in the Northeastern United States and Maryland.[1]

Our concerns for increasing the cost to the food and restaurant industries can be reinforced by the closing of 33 food establishments in Baltimore City last year for rodent infestations alone.[2] According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), rodents transmit over 35 diseases such as hantavirus, leptospirosis, and typhus to name a few.[3] Rodents also transmit diseases like Salmonella indirectly through their droppings, saliva, urine and hosting fleas.

Regarding the food industry, we are concerned about other pests like cockroaches, as they spread at least 33 kinds of bacteria, six kinds of parasitic worms and at least seven other kinds of human pathogens.[4] Additionally, this statistic may shock you, since March 1, 2018, there have been 1,975 insect and rodent violations at Montgomery County, Maryland food establishments.[5] MSPCA believes that increasing the cost of eradicating dangerous and deadly pests will only negatively impact food safety and public health in Maryland.

Lastly, with climate change expected to worsen mosquito and tickborne diseases, it is important to note that low-income and urban communities will be hit the hardest, as reinforced by a 2013 University of Maryland study titled, *Higher mosquito production in low-income neighborhoods of Baltimore and Washington, DC*, as this study points out that, the common house mosquito, a primary vector of West Nile virus, was most abundant in Baltimore. The authors of the study inferred that lower income residents may experience greater exposure to potential disease vectors and Baltimore residents specifically, were at greater risk of exposure to the predominant West Nile virus vector.[6] We urge you to take into account the potential ramifications of increasing the cost of professional residential mosquito control in areas like Baltimore.

MSPCA urges you to not increase cost of protecting public health and property in Maryland. Do not apply the sales tax to pest control services. Thank you for your time.

Andrea Brubaker

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[1] USGCRP, "Fourth National Climate Assessment: Chapter 18: Northeast," NCA4, https://nca2018.globalchange.gov/chapter/18/.
[2] https://health.baltimorecity.gov/sites/default/files/2019%20Closures.pdf
[3] Rodents," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.gov/rodents/diseases/direct.html.
[4] https://www.pestworld.org/pest-guide/cockroaches/
[5] Rodent and Insects Food Inspection Violations: Open Data Portal," https://data.montgomerycountymd.gov/Health-and-Human-Services/Rodent-and-Insects-Food-Inspection-Violations/22zb-q5me
[6] LaDeau, S. L., P. T. Leisnham, D. Biehler, and D. Bodner, 2013: *Higher mosquito production in low-income neighborhoods of Baltimore and Washington, DC: Understanding ecological drivers and mosquito-borne disease risk in temperate cities*. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 10 (4), 1505–1526. https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/10/4/1505