

HB472 -- Support

Agriculture - Use of Glyphosate - Prohibition

Environment and Transportation Committee

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Chair Barve and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

I write in support of HB472, Agriculture - Use of Glyphosate - Prohibition, and urge a favorable committee report.

As a Takoma Park City Council member, in 2014, I drafted our city's Safe Grow law, banning lawn care use of synthetic chemical pesticides, including notably glyphosate, the active ingredient of the widely used -- and widely misused -- Roundup herbicide. I helped win 2015 enactment of Montgomery County's similar Healthy Lawns Act.

Our local governments acted because the dangers posed by synthetic chemical pesticides -- including to non-targeted plant and animal life exposed, particularly children and vulnerable individuals, and to our ecosystem including the Chesapeake Bay -- are clear. These dangers have been established by scientific studies and supported by numerous peer-reviewed publications. I will spare you a retelling here as others will have covered this in their testimony. Those dangers far outweigh the pesticides' limited benefits, which are readily achieved by alternative pest-control methods and substances.

Neither Takoma Park nor Montgomery County restricts the ability to use pesticides in agriculture. That was a tactical choice made to sidestep anticipated opposition.

Agriculture applies glyphosate extensively despite its classification as "probably carcinogenic to humans" (International Agency for Research on Cancer, 2015). California adopted the classification of glyphosate as a carcinogen in 2017, however the federal Environmental Protection Agency -- Donald Trump's EPA, of course -- undercut California's action in 2019 by prohibiting that Roundup labels be required to carry a cancer warning.

My conclusions: Glyphosate is unacceptably dangerous, state action is appropriate, and action must go beyond labels and warnings. An outright ban is needed, and that is why I support HB472, to prohibit use of glyphosate in Maryland.

I urge a favorable Environment and Transportation Committee report on HB472 and General Assembly enactment of the bill.