



Larry Hogan, Governor
Boyd Rutherford, Lt. Governor
Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, Secretary

February 3, 2021

The Honorable Kumar Barve
Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee
Room 251, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Dana Stein
Vice Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee
Room 251, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Letter of Opposition – House Bill 472 – Use of Glyphosate – Prohibition

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources respectfully opposes House Bill 472. This bill would prohibit all persons from using glyphosate herbicide, more commonly known as “Roundup,” in Maryland on or after October 1, 2022.

The department is tasked with managing close to a half million acres within the state, and vegetation management is an essential task in caring for this land and meeting our mission of protecting Maryland’s natural resources. Invasive plants are having a significant detrimental impact on natural habitats and native species. Nationwide, approximately 45 percent of rare, threatened or endangered species are at risk due to invasive species. Human health and economies are also at risk from invasive species, as their impact on our natural ecosystems and economy cost billions of dollars each year.

Plainly put, removing glyphosate as a tool for managing vegetation, including invasive species will put Maryland’s public and private lands -- and the Chesapeake Bay -- in peril. DNR’s Maryland Park Service, Wildlife and Heritage Service, and Maryland Forest Service greatly rely on this common herbicide to keep our parks, wildlife management areas, and forests healthy for the benefit of the public, whether for recreation or providing necessary sequestration of harmful greenhouse gas. The Maryland Forest Service also advises HB 472 would have a significant adverse impact to invasive control and other important vegetative management on the 72% of Maryland’s forestlands owned by private individuals. The most comparable chemical alternative to glyphosate costs four to five times more, requires greater amounts of chemical to be applied, and would require greater man hours to additionally weed by hand. Hand-weeding is labor intensive and cost-prohibitive for DNR, so chemical herbicides are the only option for the removal of some species.

Scientific studies demonstrate that glyphosate breaks down very quickly within 24 hours after application and has no undesirable or residual soil effects when applied appropriately and within the labeled uses from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. A majority of the cases

that demonstrate glyphosate in the environment are due to overapplication, spray drift, and surface runoff, all of which are due to the application rather than the herbicide itself. All alternatives to glyphosate contain break-down products that are more long-lived and dangerous to our environment. As a result, the prohibition on the use of glyphosate will also have significant impacts on the tidal and nontidal wetlands in the Chesapeake Bay area. Maintaining wetlands around the Chesapeake Bay free from invasive plant species, like phragmites, will become a dangerous challenge given that there is no environmentally-safe alternative if HB 472 passes.

For these reasons, the department respectfully asks the committee to give HB 472 an unfavorable report.

Respectfully submitted,

James W. McKitrick
Director, Legislative and Constituent Services

cc: The Honorable Pat Young