



***Mission:** To improve public health in Maryland through education and advocacy **Vision:** Healthy Marylanders living in Healthy Communities*

SB268 Pesticide Regulation - Transfer to Department of the Environment

Hearing Date: 2/2/2022

Committee: EHEA

Position: SUPPORT

Chairperson Pinsky and members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee: The Maryland Public Health Association would like to express support for SB268, sponsored by Senator Kagan. This bill will transfer the regulation of pesticides, plant diseases, and mosquitos in the State from the Department of Agriculture to the Department of the Environment.

It is critically important that oversight of pesticides by a state needs to take human health impacts into account. Pesticides are toxic by design and must be appropriately regulated to limit exposures to people, particularly those most vulnerable, which includes children and the elderly as well as those who have highest risk of exposure, which includes agricultural workers and their families. In its report, Pesticide Exposure in Children, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommended that “Children’s exposures to pesticides should be limited as much as possible.” Long-term human health impacts from pesticides include some cancers and problems in the reproductive, immune, endocrine, and nervous systems.

Millions of pounds of pesticides are used annually in Maryland, though the exact amount of pesticide use is not currently available. Pesticides are applied not only to agricultural fields, but also to parks, recreational fields and golf courses and are used in schools, day care centers, hospitals, nursing homes and other public locations. They leave residues on our foods and enter our water supplies through aerial drift and surface runoff. Their effects extend well beyond targeted agricultural pests and include environmental impacts and risks to human health.

As a state, it is our duty to ensure the strongest protections against toxic exposures across the entire population where we live, work, and play. One of the strongest interventions we can take to prevent environmentally caused diseases like cancer are preventing or eliminating exposures to contaminants. Strong oversight, monitoring, and regulation of pesticide use are critical to protect the health of all Marylanders.

The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) is uniquely positioned to provide such oversight, since they currently regulate all other hazardous chemicals. It is important to note that the Department of the Environment will need additional resources and increased capacity to take on this new authority.

We urge a favorable report on SB268.

The Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA) is a nonprofit, statewide organization of public health professionals dedicated to improving the lives of all Marylanders through education, advocacy, and collaboration. We support public policies consistent with our vision of healthy Marylanders living in healthy, equitable, communities. MdPHA is the state affiliate of the American Public Health Association, a nearly 145-year-old professional organization dedicated to improving population health and reducing the health disparities that plague our state and our nation.