



February 2, 2022

**Senate Bill 268: Pesticide Regulation - Transfer to Department of the Environment**

**Committee:** Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs

**Position:** Support

Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility (CPSR) is statewide evidenced-based, organization of over 900 physicians, other health professionals, and supporters that addresses the existential public health threats: nuclear weapons, the climate crisis and the issues of pollution and toxics' effect on health, as seen through the intersectional lens of environmental, social, and racial justice. As an organization founded by physicians, we understand that prevention is far superior to treatment in reducing costs, death, illness, injury, and suffering.

[The health consequences](#) of pesticide exposure include dermatologic, gastrointestinal, respiratory, cardiac, hormonal, reproductive, immunologic, neurologic, and in some cases carcinogenic. The list of [associated conditions](#) are as varied as the classes of pesticides used today and include congenital birth defects, pre mature labor, diabetes, asthma, chronic lung disease, hypertension neurodegenerative diseases like Parkinson's, Alzheimer, and a disturbing long list of cancers including childhood leukemia and brain cancer in children While pesticide exposures impact all people, **these risks can especially effect vulnerable populations, including children, and the elderly.** Some of the most exposed are [farm families, owners and workers, agricultural communities](#) where pesticides are used on farms and more likely to get into [their ground water](#) and [drinking water](#). Pesticide residues get into plants, and animals when they graze, and into food including, for example, almost all soybeans, berries, grains, fish, and baby formula.

**Pesticides are more than an agricultural tool to be used to prevent pest and weeds in food production. Pesticides are everywhere in our environment and the stake holders are all of us who depend on a healthy environment.**

While pesticide use is part of farming, there is something called the [pesticide treadmill](#) and nothing better describes this than the story of glyphosate, and glyphosate based herbicides (GBH). Glyphosate is the most heavily applied herbicide in the world and its use has [tripled](#) since 1997. It is also the most heavily applied [pesticide in Maryland](#). Used to kill weeds and spare the genetically modified plants that are resistant to glyphosate, it has been hailed as a real advance and benefit for farmers and land care. For the farmers, the pesticide treadmill becomes expensive because resistance has led to [reduction in crop yields](#) over time. Once on this pesticide treadmill, it is hard to get off. In addition to reduction in crop yields, **resistance to**

**GBH has led to higher costs associated with spraying more often and additions of herbicides like 2-4 d, [a component of Agent Orange](#)—the sixth heavily used pesticide in Maryland and a possible carcinogen by IARC. It is marketed with glyphosate as DUO.**

The story gets more complicated though, because of health concerns related to glyphosate. It has been designated a probable carcinogen by the International Agency for Research in Cancer, IARC. A collection of studies looking at heavily exposed populations, including **workers who apply GBH, found a 45% [increased risk of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma](#)**. It is unclear whether adverse effects are due to glyphosate, the surfactants, or to their combined toxicity.

The US Geological Society found glyphosate in 36% of midwestern [streams](#) it tests and a degradation product in 69%. Maybe some of these pesticides are beneficial, especially with certain crops, but it would help to have evidence where these benefits outweigh risks to environment, health, and agriculture. We can see this is a complex picture involving chemicals, crops, environment, animals, and humans. **We need an agency qualified with toxic, scientific, and public health oversight to assess the appropriateness, for example, of using a pesticide that combines glyphosate with 2-4 d, both already linked to cancer individually.**

Other states ensure that EPA-registered pesticides, manufacturers want to sell in those states, **are reviewed by the state with a lens to assess the risks related to health and environmental impacts vs the benefits to the users**--especially farms and the land care industry, who rely on pesticides in their industry.

Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility supports SB268 because we believe the **Department of the Environment is better suited**, in consultation with Departments of Agriculture and Health, **to sort out in this very complicated picture of ever-increasing amounts of pesticides in our environment, and how to regulate them in a way that benefits all the stakeholders, including users, people, animals, plants, and our environment.**

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