



TO: The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky, Chair  
Members, Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee  
The Honorable Cheryl C. Kagan

FROM: Dr. Michael Ichniowski

DATE: February 2, 2022

RE: **SUPPORT** – Senate Bill 268 – *Pesticide Regulation – Transfer to Department of the Environment*

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The Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (MDAAP) is a statewide association representing more than 1,100 pediatricians and allied pediatric and adolescent healthcare practitioners in the State and is a strong and established advocate promoting the health and safety of all the children we serve. On behalf of MDAAP, we submit this letter of **support** for Senate Bill 268.

Children are uniquely susceptible to adverse health effects from toxic substances, particularly in the prenatal period and in early life when brain and organ development occurs, and growth begins to take place. Pesticide exposures have been linked to childhood cancers, developmental delays and lower IQs, autism spectrum disorders, inattention, and ADHD. Other effects include preterm birth, low birth weight and effects on the endocrine system. 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.” Oversight of these toxic chemicals needs to take their effects on human health into account, as well as harmful effects on our environment, including wildlife, pollinators, and the Chesapeake Bay. The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) is uniquely positioned to provide such oversight, since they currently regulate all other hazardous chemicals. The effectiveness of such regulations will be dependent on support at all levels of the state government to assure enforcement of these protections for human and environmental health.

Pesticides, which are toxic by design, 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.

Millions of pounds of pesticides are used annually in Maryland, though the exact amount of pesticide use is not currently available. The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) was charged with reporting pesticide use in Maryland by a statute passed in 2014, which also provided annual funding for these reports. Only one such report has been produced to date, a voluntary survey of pesticide use in 2014, which was based on information from only 7% of Maryland farmers and 15% of all commercial pesticide applicators in the state. A total of 4.9 million pounds of pesticide was reported in 2014 in this incomplete survey. Given the very low response rate and the lack of information for the subsequent 7 years, it is likely that pesticide use in Maryland far exceeds this amount every year and would represent substantial pesticide exposures for all Marylanders, with the youngest being the most affected by any adverse effects.

Our children deserve to be protected from harmful chemicals that can have lasting detrimental effects on their health and well-being. Significant pesticide exposures in children occur regularly in non-agricultural settings, including schools, daycare centers, parks and recreational fields. MDA is currently the agency in charge of these non-agricultural uses of pesticides, including the disinfectants being used during the current COVID-19 pandemic. MDA is also in charge of implementing and enforcing the 1998-1999 Integrated Pest Management in Schools law, a law for which MDAAP was a strong advocate. Transferring the responsibility for using IPM methods and minimizing the use of chemical pesticides in schools to MDE would take advantage of their expertise in evaluating toxic substances and their use in non-agricultural settings like schools. MDE would be better able to consider environmental health, public health, and the health of children in the regulatory process, in addition to agricultural concerns. As Senate Bill 268 proposes, input from the Maryland Department of Agriculture and the Maryland Department of Health would be part of this decision-making process. Such a transfer of regulatory oversight would also minimize the need for Maryland legislators to have to consider pesticides and related chemicals on a case-by-case basis.

MDAAP respectfully requests a favorable report for Senate Bill 268.

**For more information:**

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