

SB 268 Pesticide Regulation - Transfer to Department of the Environment

Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake supports passage of SB268 to transfer Pesticide Regulation to the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE)

Testimony of Derrick Weston, Board Member, Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake, Founder of *Stories of Food and Faith*

Our organization supports this bill because it aligns with our mission to honor, protect, and restore our shared watershed. We work with hundreds of congregations in Maryland who have pledged to serve as good stewards of the land and waters of the Chesapeake and to sustain the life and health of all creatures.

- **Pesticides Impair the Health of People, Pollinators and the Chesapeake Bay:** More than three-quarters of the Chesapeake Bay's tidal waters are impaired by chemical contaminants. From the insecticides put on farm fields to the cleaners we use to disinfect our homes and hospitals, contaminants enter the Bay and its tributaries and harm the health of both humans and wildlife. – Source: EPA Chesapeake Bay Program
https://www.chesapeakebay.net/issues/chemical_contaminants
Pesticides are linked to adverse neurological, developmental and respiratory impacts as well as linked to cancer, cognitive abnormalities and deficits, and other long-term health impacts.
Pesticides have also been linked to adverse impacts on pollinators and studies note serious declines in pollinators are also attributed to pesticides impacts.
- **Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) is not the right agency for oversight:** There are 14,000 pesticides registered for use in our state. MDA has little experience or regulatory or science expertise related to managing the human health and the environmental impact of pesticides. We at IPC urge you to move authority to the Maryland Department of Environment.

I am Derrick Weston, a Board Member of the Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake Bay and founder of *Stories of Food and Faith*, a burgeoning multi-media collective for all who care about faith-based food justice. I live in Lutherville.

I am a long-time believer in the power of storytelling. I hold a Bachelor of Arts in Film Studies from the University of Pittsburgh and a Master of Divinity from the San Francisco Theological Seminary. I now devote myself full-time to the work of food and faith. I have also spent my career serving churches and faith-based non-profits and served as an ordained Presbyterian minister. My work has appeared in *Presbyterians Today*. *Stories of Food and Faith* is the culmination of my own education and experience as a producer, podcast host, writer, speaker, and community organizer. I am very happy to provide this testimony on behalf of IPC.

Faith Leaders support the change in oversight from MDA to Maryland Dept. of the Environment on these chemical agents. Pesticide oversight of more than 14,000 pesticide products is presently solely the charge of the MDA, an agency that lacks scientific expertise on toxics, the environment, and health. This legislation, the Maryland **Pesticide Regulation – Transfer to Dept. of the Environment Bill**, would move the authority to regulate pesticides from the MDA to the MDE, the agency with scientific expertise charged with the oversight of toxic substances.

Decisions on regulations would be made with advice and counsel of the Secretaries from MDA as well as the Maryland Department of Health (MDH). With appropriate oversight from the MDE, pesticide regulations will include all voices and expertise at the table, rather than overwhelming one agency that lacks the necessary critical expertise to accomplish the task. Our communities and children will be healthier, and our pollinators, Chesapeake Bay ecosystem, and the environment will be better protected.

In Maryland, millions of pounds of pesticides are used annually. Pesticides are toxic: they have dangerous environmental and health impacts.

- The legislature must protect Maryland. We need to utilize the agencies with environmental and public health expertise to prevent exposure to the most toxic pesticides.
- MDE would restrict or ban the sale, use and distribution of any pesticide by regulation if it concludes that the pesticide causes substantial harm to the environment.

As a healthy foods advocate, with a strong interest in responsible food sourcing, I want to know that an agency in our state is reviewing pesticides for toxic impacts on people and the environment, and chemicals that need to be further restricted or even banned are evaluated.

There is also an important Environmental Justice component of this transfer of Authority to MDE. This is critical because we know that underserved communities are more exposed to pesticides in their diets, air, water, food, schools, day care centers, playing fields and at local public facilities.

As the Senate Education and Health Committee, you are responsible for understanding the implications when agencies do not follow through with the intent of laws your body institutes. I call on you to be thoughtful about who you hold accountable to uphold Maryland's laws. This bill ensures implementation of the law will be intentional and reliable.

Faith Leaders like me support your initiative to move this oversight to the MDE.

Derrick Weston
Founder, Stories of Food and Faith
Board Member, Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake Bay
Lutherville, Maryland