



Testimony on SB268
Pesticide Regulation - Transfer to Department of the Environment
Position: FAVORABLE

Dear Mr. Chair and Members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Ricarra Jones, and I am the Political Director of 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East. We are the largest healthcare workers union in the nation – representing 10,000 healthcare workers in long-term care facilities and hospitals across Maryland. Our union supports SB 268: Pesticide Regulation - Transfer to Department of the Environment and urges the Committee to issue a favorable report.

In a time when COVID runs rampant, and healthcare is a public health crisis, we must also be conscious of other factors that have and continue to negatively impact our health. In Maryland, millions of pounds of pesticides are used annually without needed environmental and public health oversight. Without proper use and oversight, studies have shown that pesticides are linked to healthcare ailments such as cancer, reproductive disorders, as well as nervous and hormonal system disruption. Due to this, these chemicals don't just carry a healthcare assault on adults, but babies yet to be born as well.

Currently, the Maryland Department of Agriculture has oversight over pesticides but lacks resources and the scientific knowledge to set regulations to ensure that our healthcare is not jeopardized by pesticides. By passing this bill, it would allow the Maryland Department of the Environment to oversee pesticides which, consequently, gives a different oversight entity purview over a substance that directly impacts the environment and our healthcare. This is needed now more than ever since more environmental factors including environmental chemicals are showing to negatively impact our bodies, including the pesticides we eat that are spread on our food, clothing, and other materials that encounter our bodies.

For 1199 members, this bill is necessary for healthcare and personal reasons. Allowing the Maryland Department of the Environment to have purview over pesticides would benefit healthcare workers by alleviating the number of patients that flood our hospitals and healthcare facilities, due to pesticide-related reasons. On a personal level, our healthcare workers are men and women who fight every day to relieve healthcare disparities from others including themselves. Therefore, healthcare workers are adamantly against continuing the

historic spread of pesticide-related illnesses to their families and communities, including allowing a state department that lacks the proper resources to oversee its regulations.

In a time where our healthcare system is being inundated with COVID-19 cases and other healthcare disparities, we ask that this Committee give SB268 a favorable report to relieve our healthcare system and prevent future environmental hazards.

Respectfully,

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