



February 2, 2022

Re: SB 268: Pesticide Regulation - Transfer to Department of the Environment
Submitted to: Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
Position: Support

Dear Chairman Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the committee,

I am the Deputy Director for the [Children's Environmental Health Network](#), a Maryland resident, and a parent. I am writing in support of SB268 (Pesticide Regulation - Transfer to Department of the Environment) to transfer the authority to regulate pesticides from the Department of Agriculture to the Department of the Environment.

The Children's Environmental Health Network is a national organization that for 30 years has worked to protect children and future generations from environmental health hazards and promote a healthy environment. Our Executive Director has served on the Maryland Children's Environmental Health and Protection Advisory Council for over 5 years. Pesticides, by design, are environmental health hazards, and therefore children's health and developmental considerations must be central to the pesticide regulatory process.

Children at all stages of development (including during prenatal development) are especially vulnerable to the toxic health effects of pesticides due to their unique physiological and behavioral differences, such as differences in their absorption, distribution, metabolism and excretion of xenobiotics. In addition, their organ systems (including their immune, nervous, and respiratory systems) are still developing, and disruption during development can lead to life-long harm. Pesticides have well documented adverse effects on children, including preterm birth, low birth weight, congenital abnormalities, pediatric cancers, neurobehavioral and cognitive deficits, and asthma.¹

Maryland's children are struggling with many of these health and developmental conditions:

- The latest Centers for Disease Control and Prevention surveillance reports that the autism rate among 8-year-olds in Maryland is up 6.5 percent since surveillance two years prior.²
- The prevalence of behavioral or conduct problems among Maryland children age 3-17 is 7.6 percent compared with the nationwide prevalence of 6.8 percent.³

¹ <https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2015-12/documents/pest-impact-hsstaff.pdf>

² <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/ss/ss7011a1.htm>

³ <https://mchb.hrsa.gov/data/national-surveys>

- The prevalence of asthma among Maryland children age 0-17 years is 10.1 percent compared with the nationwide prevalence of 7.7 percent.⁴
 - In Baltimore City (a predominantly African American city), the asthma prevalence is 20 percent—double the state prevalence.⁵
- Maryland's percentage of children born at low birth weight is higher than the national rate (9 percent compared with 8 percent).
 - In Baltimore City, the rate is 12 percent.⁶
- While the rate of preterm births in Maryland mirrors the national average, the rate among Maryland's Black women is 44 percent higher than the rate among all other women in the state.⁷

We need to improve maternal and child health and development outcomes in our state, and we need to address the significant health disparities for our families of color and in under-resourced communities. A critical strategy to achieve this lies with effective regulation of toxic substances, including pesticides. Improved regulation, informed by thorough assessment of the most up-to-date, rigorous, peer-reviewed pediatric, toxicological and epidemiological science by subject matter experts, will reduce children and pregnant peoples' exposures and reduce their risk of adverse impacts.

The Maryland Department of Agriculture was initially established to serve the agricultural interests of the state, and a significant part of its current mission is to support farming and farmers. The department lacks environmental and toxicological, epidemiological and other scientific expertise among its staff to effectively assess the level of safety and risks of pesticides and their impacts on human health. **The Maryland Department of the Environment has the staff expertise and the clear, uncompromised mission of environmental and public health protection to best oversee pesticide regulation, with counsel from the Maryland Departments of Agriculture and Health. It is important to note that the Department of the Environment will need additional resources and increased capacity to take on this new authority.**

For the reasons stated above, I strongly urge this committee to vote favorably on SB268, Pesticide Regulation - Transfer to Department of the Environment. Children are our most important resource and are the very embodiment of our future. A favorable vote on SB268 will safeguard their health and provide them with a better chance to reach their full potential.

Respectfully submitted,

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⁴ Ibid.

⁵ [https://abell.org/sites/default/files/files/2020_Abell_pediatric%20asthma_FINAL-web%20\(dr\).pdf](https://abell.org/sites/default/files/files/2020_Abell_pediatric%20asthma_FINAL-web%20(dr).pdf)

⁶ https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/sites/default/files/media/document/CHR2021_MD.pdf

⁷ <https://www.marchofdimes.org/peristats/tools/reportcard.aspx?frmodrc=1®=24>