

**Written Testimony Submitted for the Record to the
Maryland House of Delegates
Judicial Proceedings Committee
For the Hearing on
Pesticide Regulations – Transfer to Department of the Environment (HB387)
February 9, 2022**

SUPPORT

Free State PTA represents over 34,000 volunteer members and families in over 500 public schools. Free State PTA is composed of families, students, teachers, administrators, and business as well as community leaders devoted to the educational success of children and family engagement in Maryland. As the state's premier and largest child advocacy organization, Free State PTA is a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families, schools and communities and a strong advocate for public education.

House Bill 387 bill would place the oversight of pesticides used in our homes, schools, and communities in the state agency whose scope includes oversight of toxins in Maryland and protection of Maryland's natural resources. Free State PTA's position pertaining to environmental health and safety addresses support for HB0387 as it advocates for laws that:

- **Eliminate environmental pollutants and prevent new hazards.**
- **Protect children** from health risks by testing for specific hazards in and around homes and schools and, if hazards are found, **by limiting exposure and addressing remedies.**
- Support research and **data collection about environmental hazards and health risks.**

Free State PTA believes that transferring the regulation of pesticides from the Department of Agriculture to the Maryland Department of Environment (MDE) would provide expanded comprehensive protection to our children and our natural resources (i.e., air, water, soil) from exposure to known toxins, specifically to US Environmental Protection Agency registered hazardous pesticides, over 1,4000 of which MDA registered for use in Maryland in 2021.

Free State PTA strongly believes MDE enforcement and adherence to the 1997 Maryland School Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Law would ensure that our children receive the full protection intended by this groundbreaking legislation. We appreciate the enormous challenges posed by this public health crisis and believe that pesticide regulations under MDE would create safer physical environments for our children, teachers, and staff when EPA registered pesticides are used in schools, especially those currently being used to control pathogens associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Transparency, verification, and compliance with the Maryland School IPM Law, intended to specifically protect children and their school environment is necessary to ensure the measures taken meet current science-based guidance on safer air quality and water quality during pest management in schools.

The mission of PTA is to make every child's potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children.

As pesticide use exists where children live, work (attend school) and play (our communities), an agency whose priority is agriculture and supporting farmers in Maryland does not align with protecting children and their environmental health. We believe an agency whose focus is protecting public health and our environment from known toxins would be better able to protect children from pesticides allowed for use in the State of Maryland.

HB 387 is about meeting the health and environmental protection needs of all Maryland children. The State agency whose primary focus is protection should be the agency that oversees the most hazardous of toxins, pesticides, which are designed to kill living things and are a known hazard to children's health.

We support all efforts to protect the most vulnerable, infants and children, from known hazards. The chemicals in pesticides have the potential for causing harm to growing children. It is prudent and responsible to monitor these chemicals as they enter the environment, and therefore have the potential for coming in contact with children. Maryland has a responsibility to track these chemicals and monitor their impact to public health and specifically to growing children. The MDE is the agency best equipped to perform that vital responsibility. Our children deserve their protection.

Free State PTA recommends a favorable report on HB 387.

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