

February 2, 2022

**Testimony re: SB 268: Pesticide Regulation – Transfer to Department of the Environment**  
**Submitted to: The Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee**  
**Position: In Support**

Dear Chairman Barve and members of this Committee,

The Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments is the only national organization of nurses whose main focus is on the intersection of health and the environment. We are concerned about the human health effects that may be associated with pesticide exposures and strongly support SB 268.

**A growing body of science regarding the adverse impacts of pesticides on human health is undebatable. Pesticide exposure is linked to asthma and other respiratory disorders, autism, ADHD, cancer, developmental disorders, Parkinson’s disease, Alzheimer’s, birth defects, fertility problems and more (see references below).**

**According to the US EPA**, “The health effects of pesticides depend on the type of pesticide. Some, such as the organophosphates and carbamates, affect the nervous system. Others may irritate the skin or eyes. Some pesticides may be carcinogens. Others may affect the hormone or endocrine system in the body.”<sup>1</sup>

**According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s 4th National Report on Human Exposure to Environmental Chemicals**<sup>2</sup>, pesticides are ubiquitous in our environment and are leading to increasing body burdens of these chemicals. What this means is that people of all ages, including newborn babies at the time of birth are found to have pesticides, among other potentially hazardous chemicals, circulating in their blood.

**A case in point: in 2021, the US EPA finally banned chlorpyrifos** on all food crops, after several states (including Maryland) restricted, and even banned, the use of the brain-harming organophosphate pesticide chlorpyrifos because it was found to be impacting the developing fetus and young children at any detectable level. This decision was based on the EPA’s own 20+ years of research<sup>3</sup> on this pesticide and in response to lawsuits and pressure from the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals demanding that EPA make a final determination on chlorpyrifos. Maryland was among [several states](#) that sued the EPA for its decision to reverse the ban on chlorpyrifos for agricultural uses.

A [2018 review by leading experts in Project TENDR](#) found that the widespread use of organophosphate pesticides, including chlorpyrifos, to control insects has resulted in ubiquitous human exposures and that prenatal exposure at low levels is putting children at risk for cognitive and behavioral deficits and for neurodevelopmental disorders.

**Pesticides are particularly dangerous to the health of children.** Children are especially susceptible to adverse health effects from pesticides, particularly in the fetal period and in early life when brain and organ development occurs. [Fernando Stein, former president of the American Academy of Pediatrics, said:](#) “*Extensive epidemiologic studies associate pesticide exposure with adverse birth and developmental outcomes, including preterm birth, low birth weight, congenital abnormalities, pediatric cancers, neurobehavioral and cognitive deficits, and asthma. The evidence is especially strong linking certain pesticide exposure with pediatric cancers and permanent neurological damage.*”

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-science-and-assessing-pesticide-risks/human-health-issues-related-pesticides#What>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/exposurereport/index.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.regulations.gov/document/EPA-HQ-OPP-2015-0653-0454>



**The Maryland IPM in Schools Law notes** that all parents and staff must receive notification prior to pesticide applications in our public schools and that the notice include possible adverse impacts; a US EPA statement notes that “pregnant women and children under the age of two should avoid unnecessary exposure to pesticides”.

**Oversight of pesticides by a state needs to take human health impacts into account.** The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) is uniquely positioned to provide such oversight, since they currently regulate all other hazardous chemicals.

**The Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments strongly urges you to protect the health of Marylanders with a favorable report for SB 268** to ensure authority to regulate pesticides is shifted from the Maryland Department of Agriculture whose charge is the promotion and protection of Maryland’s agriculture industry to the Maryland Dept. of the Environment—the agency with scientific expertise that is already charged with the oversight of toxic substances.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide support for this bill.

Sincerely,  
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