

Maryland Children's Environmental Health Coalition

Health and Government Operations Committee
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Room 241
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
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HB 570

Pesticides – Mosquito Control Products
and PFAS Chemicals

Support

INTRODUCTION

Maryland Children's Environmental Health Coalition (MD CEHC) is a group of children's advocates working collaboratively toward improving the lives of children in Maryland. Our coalition works to support and advocate for laws that address children's environmental health and well-being. MD CEHC recognizes the urgent need to address the growing issues surrounding the environment where our children live, play, and attend school. We are specifically concerned about protecting children from known hazards, and preventing new hazards, thus allowing our children to reach their full potential as contributing members of society.

Our Coalition strongly **SUPPORTS HB 570 Pesticides – Mosquito Control Products and PFAS Chemicals**. This bill would ensure that pesticides used to control mosquitos do not contain PFAS chemicals by mandating that the Secretary of Agriculture require the submission of an affidavit ensuring that the mosquito control products being applied in Maryland by MDA and by commercial pesticide applicators do not contain PFAS chemicals. **HB 570** is consistent with our mission and goals as it addresses in law Maryland's effort to:

- **Eliminate environmental pollutants and prevents new hazards.**
- **Protect children from health risks by limiting exposure to highly toxic chemicals (i.e. PFAS) and addressing remedies.**
- Support research and **data collection about environmental hazards and health risks.**

MD CEHC believes strong action should be taken by the Maryland General Assembly to ensure that children and their environment are protected from preventable exposures to PFAS – in this case pesticides used for mosquito control that are known to contain PFAS. **HB 570** would provide expanded comprehensive protection to our children and our natural resources (i.e. air, water, soil) from exposure to a known toxin, specifically PFAS – a recognized hazardous chemical found in pesticides registered by the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) and used throughout Maryland for mosquito control.

PESTICIDES and CHILDREN:

Pesticide exposure in our communities, schools and homes is a growing concern. There have been efforts made on many levels to protect children and their environment from exposure to known hazards. The evidence continues to mount and the data-gaps are now closing regarding the impacts of certain pesticides on children. Sadly, federal, state, and local governments have been slow to enact protections even in light of the ever-growing research supporting the need for better protections from pesticide exposures. While more data is needed on the impacts of pesticides, there is sufficient preliminary evidence to warrant concern. EPA registered pesticides have been shown to actually weaken the immune system and exacerbate current Covid-related respiratory symptoms. **Eliminating pesticides that contain PFAS is one step in protecting children from pesticides known to cause injury and harm to them.**

PFAS and CHILDREN:

It is well documented that growing children are particularly vulnerable to the effects of exposure to per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), a group of endocrine disrupting chemicals which are persistent in the environment. MD CEHC understands that early childhood exposure to PFASs is associated with poor health outcomes in children. These "forever chemicals" have been found at dangerously toxic levels in several pesticides registered for MDA's mosquito control program. Typically, 2,100 Maryland communities in 16 Maryland counties opt-in to MDA's Mosquito Control Program. This is in addition to the applications made by private Mosquito Control applicators to residential properties, commercial properties and in communities.

To date, there is no research on the effects of combining these “forever chemicals” with pesticides, which are already known to have adverse health impacts. Additionally, PFAS have been shown to impact the effectiveness of vaccines used for COVID-19 as noted by Harvard expert Dr. Phillipe Grandjean, putting our children at greater risk of compromise during the COVID-19 Pandemic. There currently is no vaccine available for children under 5 years of age.

US EPA on PFAS and CHILDREN:

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) states that *“because children are still developing, they may be more sensitive to the harmful effects of chemicals such as PFAS. They can also be exposed more than adults because: Children drink more water, eat more food, and breathe more air per pound of body weight than adults, which can increase their exposure to PFAS.”*¹

Additionally, *“PFAS can be present in our water, soil, air, and food...”*² EPA has also stated that *“Due to their widespread production and use, as well as their ability to move and persist in the environment, surveys conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) show that most people in the United States have been exposed to some PFAS. Most known exposures are relatively low, but some can be high, particularly when people are exposed to a concentrated source³...”* in this case from the application of PFAS in pesticides used for Mosquito Control in Maryland.

PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN:

As pesticide use exists where children live, work (attend school) and play (our communities), it is prudent to ensure that the Legislature take steps to protect children from well documented harm – in this case from exposure to PFAS found in pesticides used for mosquito control. The Legislature has an obligation to prioritize the protection children and their environmental health. We believe **HB 570** is yet another tool in protecting public health and our environment from known toxins (PFAS) and ensure better protection of children from pesticides allowed for use in the State of Maryland for mosquito control.

Maryland parents are also concerned about the health of the watershed including ground water accessed by wells for drinking water in homes and schools where PFAS is known to migrate. Concern is not only because these are sources of drinking water, but also because these are the waterways where their children live, learn and play. The health effects of such exposures as detailed in the Report by the MDE and Maryland Department of Health (MDH) entitled Maryland Children and the Environment⁴ are noted in the forward;

“It is well-recognized that the health of children is directly related to the environment generally and to specific environmental factors...Perhaps no single factor is more important to these efforts than reliable, accurate information that enhances the public understanding and supports the development of effective prevention efforts”.

MARYLAND'S COMMITMENT TO CHILDREN

HB 570 is about meeting the health and environmental protection needs of all Maryland children. The General Assembly has taken action to define in statute (Health Article §13–1501 thru §13–1506)⁵ that it recognizes that children in the State face an array of preventable exposures to environmental hazards in their schools, homes, and communities. In certain cases – documented in statute - children are at greater risk than adults for exposure to and possible illness from environmental hazards because children;

- i. Have a decreased ability to detoxify certain substances;
- ii. Have a greater sensitivity to environmental hazards during the stages of development and growth as a result of their immature body organs and tissues and immature immune systems;
- iii. Have different exposure behavior patterns, such as hand-to-mouth behavior, spending a greater amount of time outdoors near hazards, and spending more time on the floor and on the ground where contaminants can concentrate; and
- iv. Take in a greater amount of contaminants due to their eating proportionately more food, breathing proportionately more air, and drinking proportionately more fluids than adults.

CONCLUSION

Knowledge is power – here the power to protect children. **HB 570** would reduce the introduction of PFAS into our environment essentially by eliminating a known source - the uses of mosquito control pesticides that contain PFAS. The proposed actions within **MD 570** on PFAS are well within the regulatory bodies equipped to address the issues related to pesticide use in Maryland.

We support all efforts to protect the most vulnerable, infants and children, from known hazards, which is consistent with Maryland Statute.

We hope that the Committee acts swiftly and favorably on **HB 570**.

¹ United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) document accessed February 24, 2022

“Our Current Understanding of the Human Health and Environmental Risks of PFAS”

<https://www.epa.gov/pfas/our-current-understanding-human-health-and-environmental-risks-pfas>

² ibid

³ ibid

⁴ Maryland Children and the Environment; State of Maryland (MDH & MDE);

url: <https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/OEHFP/EH/Shared%20Documents/CEHPAC/Report-2008-FINAL.pdf> accessed 1/30/22

⁵ Children's Environmental Health and Protection in Maryland Statute accessed February 18, 2022 at urls:

<https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Laws/StatuteText?article=ghg§ion=13-1501&enactments=false>

<https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Laws/StatuteText?article=ghg§ion=13-1502&enactments=False&archived=False>

<https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Laws/StatuteText?article=ghg§ion=13-1503&enactments=False&archived=False>

<https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Laws/StatuteText?article=ghg§ion=13-1504&enactments=False&archived=False>

<https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Laws/StatuteText?article=ghg§ion=13-1505&enactments=False&archived=False>

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