



**SB916 Environment - Ethylene Oxide - Prohibition**  
**Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**  
**March 15, 2023**

**Position:** Unfavorable

**Background:** SB916 would prohibit the use, manufacturing, distribution, and sale of ethylene oxide in Maryland.

**Comments:** The Maryland Retailers Association has serious concerns about the impact that a prohibition on ethylene oxide (EtO) could have on businesses in Maryland. EtO is a chemical compound used in a wide variety of manufacturing production and industries including the production of textiles, personal products like shampoo and laundry detergent, and automotive products like antifreeze and brake fluid, and the sterilization of spices and medical equipment. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reports that “the use of EtO is the only sterilization method available for many medical devices and approximately 50 percent of all sterile medical devices in the United States are treated with EtO annually”.<sup>1</sup>

EtO has been used as a sterilization agent since the mid-twentieth century, and Maryland is home to a variety of businesses that use the chemical to sterilize spices and medical equipment. Biotechnology companies, which can rely heavily on the use of or access to EtO, also make up a growing industry sector in the state. These industries would all be negatively impacted by a prohibition of EtO in Maryland.

The EPA is currently reviewing its registration of EtO and will issue mitigation measures for its use and potential exposures as part of the review process. The EPA is not alone in working to address any risks of using EtO; industries that use the chemical are also researching product stewardship technologies that can improve safety practices and procedures for EtO’s use.

MRA would urge the Committee against the proposed restriction that would negatively impact a variety of businesses and industries in Maryland, and recommends an unfavorable report on SB916. Thank you for your consideration.

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<sup>1</sup> Environmental Protection Agency. (2022, August). *Ethylene Oxide (EtO)*. EPA. <https://www.epa.gov/ingredients-used-pesticide-products/ethylene-oxide-eto>