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Committee: Education, Energy, and Environment

Testimony on: SB158 Pesticide Registration - PFAS Testing - Requirements

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: February 2, 2023

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club strongly supports SB158, which would prohibit the Secretary of Agriculture from registering a pesticide for use against mosquitoes in the State unless the distributor of the pesticide submits to the Department test results indicating the pesticide has passed the PFAS test and an affidavit attesting to the legitimacy of the PFAS test results; and prohibiting, beginning January 1, 2026, the Secretary from registering a pesticide for use in the State unless PFAS test results and a certain affidavit are submitted by the distributor.

A recent study of commonly used pesticides has found 6 of 10 to have surprisingly high levels of levels of PFAS chemicals.¹ This is of great concern because PFAS chemicals once applied to the soil can become part of food crops. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), PFAS are artificial substances that have been used in thousands of products since the 1940s. PFAS can be found in many household and personal care products, food packaging, even food itself (such as dairy products from cows exposed to PFAS). PFAS can travel easily through the environment and break down extremely slowly. This can lead to PFAS in public water systems and private wells. PFAS can also contaminate soil and water near landfills, hazardous waste sites, and any manufacturing or chemical production facilities that use or produce PFAS.

Current research suggests that continued exposure to PFAS can lead to numerous harmful health effects. Since PFAS do not break down easily, they can accumulate over time in the human body. PFAS can lead to reproductive issues, delayed development in children, increased risk of certain cancers, increased cholesterol levels, hormonal effects, and immunosuppression. However, because there are thousands of PFAS it is difficult to determine precisely how each one impacts human health.²

Maryland must take action to protect our most vulnerable populations (children and pregnant women) from the known and unknown public health impacts of PFAS. There are already 98 PFAS regulations in 20 states.³ We strongly support a favorable vote in SB 0158.

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¹ Journal of Hazardous Materials Letters (Sept 2022) <https://beyondpesticides.org/dailynewsblog/2022/10/despite-epa-safety-assurances-alarming-levels-of-pfas-found-in-commonly-used-pesticides/>

² <https://www.epa.gov/pfas/our-current-understanding-human-health-and-environmental-risks-pfas>

³ <https://www.saferstates.com/toxic-chemicals/pfas/>

Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America's oldest and largest [national] grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.