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**HB 319: Pesticide Registration – PFAS Testing – Requirements The House Committee on Health and Government Operations**

**In Support**

February 21, 2023

Chair Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chair Kelly, and members of the Committee,

The Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments (ANHE) is the only national nursing organization focused solely on the intersection of health and the environment. **ANHE urges the committee to issue a favorable report for HB 319.**

PFAS exposure has been linked to increased risk of breast, kidney and testicular cancer, damage to liver function, decreased vaccination response and compromised immune response to infections including COVID-19, high cholesterol, thyroid disease, complications in pregnancy and infant development. In a report by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine released in 2022,<sup>1</sup> evidence demonstrated an association between PFAS exposure and increased risk of decreased antibody response, dyslipidemia (abnormally high cholesterol), decreased infant and fetal growth, and increased risk of kidney cancer. Further, most PFA substances don't break down, rather they persist in the environment for long periods of time. Due to their widespread use, PFA chemicals can accumulate in the body over time.

As an organization, ANHE acknowledges that human health is interconnected with every aspect of the natural and built environment and when the environment is harmed, human health is threatened.<sup>2</sup> Because, nurses are responsible for health promotion and disease prevention and are also the most trusted profession,<sup>3</sup> nurses are crucial in creating policies and programs that prevent disease, solve environmental health problems and reduce disease burdens. Environment is one of four traditional

<sup>1</sup> National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2022. *Guidance on PFAS exposure, testing, and clinical follow-up*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

<https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/26156/guidance-on-pfas-exposure-testing-and-clinical-follow-up>

<sup>2</sup> Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments. (2009). Bringing science and passion to the environmental health movement. Wingspread Statement. <https://envirn.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Wingspread-Statement-ANHE.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Brenan, M. (2023, Jan 10). Nurses retain top ethics rating in U.S., but below 2020 high. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/467804/nurses-retain-top-ethics-rating-below-2020-high.aspx>



## Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments

Bringing Science and Passion to the Environmental Health Movement

concepts in nursing: nurse, patient/client, health, and environment. Nurses are led by professional obligations<sup>4</sup> that makes addressing climate and health a professional focus. Because there is research that demonstrates<sup>5</sup> substantial disease burden (medical care cost and lost productivity) from PFAS exposure to be 5.5 billion dollars annually for the United States, we feel that it is integral for HB 319 regarding pesticide registration – including PFAS testing, to pass.

A study by Dr. Steven Lasee<sup>6</sup> found PFAS at extremely high levels – at millions of parts per trillion – in 6 out of 10 commonly used pesticides in Maryland. This was found not only in the pesticides themselves, but in the plant tissues of the crops themselves at levels thousands of times higher than EPA’s maximum safe lifetime drinking water advisory or 0.02 parts per trillion. This exposure may be our highest yet, when we consider that even a “healthy” diet with plenty of vegetables may, in fact, be highly contaminated by PFAS.

Additionally, these PFAS chemicals run off fields into our waterways, adding to the levels of PFAS in our rivers and bays. Millions of Marylanders draw their drinking water from the Potomac and Patuxent Rivers and PFAS cannot be removed by municipal water treatment.

The Maryland Department of the Environment had to issue a fish consumption<sup>7</sup> advisory for Piscataway Creek due to the high levels of PFAS found, and the EPA has previously shown high levels of PFAS in fish tissue all along the Potomac River, from D.C. to Cumberland, Maryland.

We thank this committee for its wisdom and its leadership in the Maryland legislature for passing the George “Walter” Taylor Act last year. Unfortunately, a new source of pervasive PFAS contamination has been discovered – pesticides. Millions of pounds of pesticides are applied annually in Maryland.

Because the federal government has yet to act on this pressing issue, Maryland must act. **The Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments strongly urges you to pass HB 319 and protect the health of Marylanders.**

Sincerely,

Katie Huffling, DNP, RN, CNM, FAAN

Executive Director, Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments

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<sup>4</sup> American Nurses Association. Nursing: Scope and standards of practice. (4th ed).

<https://www.nursingworld.org/~4af71a/globalassets/catalog/book-toc/nssp3e-sample-chapter.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Obsekov, V., Kahn, L.G. & Trasande, L. (2022). Leveraging systematic reviews to explore disease burden and costs of Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl substance exposures in the United States. *Expo Health*.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12403-022-00496-yhttps://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12403-022-00496-y>

<sup>6</sup> Lasee, S., et al. (2022). Targeted analysis and total oxidizable precursor assay of several insecticides for PFAS. *Journal of Hazardous Materials Letters*, 3.

<sup>7</sup> Piscataway Fish Consumption Advisory for PFOS.

[https://mde.maryland.gov/PublicHealth/Documents/Piscataway\\_FCA\\_PFOS\\_Summary\\_Final.pdf](https://mde.maryland.gov/PublicHealth/Documents/Piscataway_FCA_PFOS_Summary_Final.pdf)