

March 5, 2024

In support of SB911

Dear Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee,

My name is Rudy Arredondo. I am a policy analyst and the president and founder of Latino Farmers & Ranchers International, Inc. (LFRI). I have worked twice at the Department of Agriculture as a Civil Rights officer to investigate cases of discrimination against USDA employees (Title V of the Civil Rights Act of 1965, as amended) and USDA programs beneficiaries (Title VI, CRA 1965, as amended). I was appointed commissioner for the Maryland Black and Minority Health Governor's commission as chairman of Task Force on Finance, Access and Indigent Care. In addition, I was a recipient of the United Nations Association (D.C. Chapter) Human Rights Award, the Maryland Governor's Citation for Health, the Maryland House of Delegates Citation for Health Issues Leadership, and the Maryland Senate Citation for Health Leadership.

LFRI represents Latino farmers, ranchers and producers throughout the United States and internationally, including members in Maryland, as a board member of Maryland based farm organization, Future Harvest. Our members are generally small and medium size producers. The mission of LFRI is to protect, preserve, and serve historically discriminated against farm workers, farmers, and ranchers.

Our focus is on sustainable practices, taking a conscious approach on agricultural practices. We use traditional methods, minimizing the use of chemicals.

The application of new technologies in the market at a speed greater than the imperative corresponding regulatory update is of great concern to us. Our members are in direct contact with agricultural elements, animals, and the land on a daily basis. Our members have the right and the responsibility as producers to know if a product that is applied to their animals has a gene structure- or function-modifying capability and its risks to workers and their families, consumers, and the environment.

I have personally experienced, firsthand, the harmful consequences of dealing with frequent exposure to toxic agricultural products. For example, I was in direct contact with pesticides growing up. My family and I were migrant farm workers. I have worked in agriculture since I was five years old, even through college. In addition, I have been exposed to the drift of Agent Orange. I suffered for many years from boils and rashes in the summer, among other health conditions.

The health of my children has been negatively affected as well.

We need proper labeling to make proper choices regarding the use of potentially gene structure- or

function-modifying products. SB911 helps us move in the direction of transparency and informed decision.

Sincerely,

Rudy Arredondo
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