



March 13, 2024

**The House Health and Government Operations Committee**

**In Support of HB1190: Pesticides - PFAS Chemicals - Prohibitions**

We write on behalf of Farmworker Justice and Migrant Clinicians Network to urge you to support House Bill 1190, *Pesticides - PFAS Chemicals - Prohibitions*. Farmworker Justice is a nonprofit organization that works to empower farmworkers to improve their living and working conditions, immigration status, health, occupational safety and access to justice. Migrant Clinicians Network is a nonprofit dedicated to migration health and provides extensive training and technical assistance to clinicians across the country serving farmworkers and rural communities.

HB1190 would prohibit the sale of pesticides containing PFAS chemicals, including perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances, beginning June 1, 2025 and ban their use beginning December 31, 2025. PFAS are known as “forever chemicals” due to their persistence in the environment. Because they are extremely slow to break down, these chemicals bioaccumulate in animals and humans. Scientific evidence indicates that PFAS are endocrine disruptors linked with certain types of cancer.<sup>1</sup> Multiple studies have found associations between PFAS exposure and an alarming array of health effects including reproductive toxicity, preeclampsia, reduced birth weight, altered maternal and neonatal thyroid function, negative impacts on childhood neurodevelopment, non-alcoholic fatty liver disease in children, alterations in pubertal development, diabetes, increased blood cholesterol levels, hypertension, myocardial infarction, decreased kidney function, visual impairment, Crohn’s disease, immune system

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<sup>1</sup> Kirk M, Smurthwaite K, Bräunig J, Trevenar S, D’Este C, Lucas R, Lal A, Korda R, Clements A, Mueller J, Armstrong B. *The PFAS Health Study: Systematic Literature Review*. Canberra: The Australian National University. 2018. [https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/bitstream/1885/241032/1/PFAS%20Health%20Study%20Systematic%20Review\\_1.pdf](https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/bitstream/1885/241032/1/PFAS%20Health%20Study%20Systematic%20Review_1.pdf)

suppression, cerebrovascular diseases, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease (females), downregulation of certain microRNAs, and cancer of the breast, testicles and kidneys.<sup>2</sup>

PFAS contamination in agricultural pesticides poses a significant public health threat, not just to the general public who eat contaminated food, but also to farmworkers. Farmworkers are exposed to PFAS when they handle, mix, load and apply pesticides, as well as when they are exposed to pesticide drift or enter treated fields. Farmworker families, many of whom live on or near the farms, are also exposed when pesticide drift and runoff contaminate the air, soil and water around their homes, and when residues are brought home on contaminated work clothing. The risk is particularly high for pregnant women and children, given that exposure to some PFAS is associated with preeclampsia and other reproductive effects, while exposure in early childhood is associated with decreased immune response and neurodevelopmental impacts, among other health outcomes.<sup>3</sup>

Farmworker communities already face serious health challenges due to their low incomes, lack of health insurance, limited access to health care, and language barriers. They also face a myriad of occupational hazards that include heat stress, musculoskeletal injuries, and exposure to pesticides whose active ingredients are associated with some types of cancer, degenerative neurologic diseases, and immune effects.<sup>4</sup> Substandard housing further contributes to the occupational and environmental health threats they endure. PFAS contamination of pesticides can only add to the already high health burdens faced by this population.

HB1190 is a crucial step in protecting farmworkers, their families and rural communities from PFAS contamination. Farmworkers are one of the most overburdened environmental justice communities in the state. By decisively addressing PFAS contamination in pesticides, the Maryland General Assembly will be ensuring that they are no longer exposed to severe health risks stemming from PFAS exposure. This will benefit farmworkers, rural communities, and every state resident who may be exposed to PFAS in food and the environment. HB1190 will protect the health of Marylanders and become a model for states across the nation. Farmworker Justice and MCN urge the committee to support this important public health legislation.

Respectfully submitted,

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<sup>2</sup> Chohan A, Petaway H, Rivera-Diaz V, Day A, Colaianni O, Keramati M. Per and polyfluoroalkyl substances scientific literature review: water exposure, impact on human health, and implications for regulatory reform. *Rev Environ Health*. 2020 Sep 30;36(2):235-259. doi: 10.1515/reveh-2020-0049. PMID: 32990652.

<sup>3</sup> Chohan et al. (2020). *Supra* note 2.

<sup>4</sup> McCauley LA, Anger WK, Keifer M, Langley R, Robson MG, Rohlman D. Studying health outcomes in farmworker populations exposed to pesticides. *Environ Health Perspect*. 2006 Jun;114(6):953-60. doi: 10.1289/ehp.8526. PMID: 16760000; PMCID: PMC1480483.

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