

Letter from Maryland Farmers re: HB1190

March 13, 2024

Chairman Pena-Melnyk
Vice Chair Cullison
Health & Government Operations Committee
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401-1991

Re: IN SUPPORT: HB1190 – Pesticides – PFAS Chemicals – Prohibition

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, Members of the Committee

We are Maryland farmers who grow grain, fruit, vegetables, herbs, meat and meat products, poultry and other food, feed, and fiber, both conventionally and organically, and are in support of HB 1190 Pesticides - PFAS Chemicals - Prohibition.

HB1190 accomplishes an important, needed, and doable step in reducing the impacts of PFAS "forever chemicals" that are a threat to all farmers, to the owners on whose land they farm, and to irreplaceable resources of our soil and water. The threat is from aerial drift, from runoff, and from conventional farmers who unknowingly may be directly applying these pesticides that have PFAS chemicals as an active ingredient. While all farmers are at serious risk from persistent PFAS contamination, organic farmers have an added concern: they could lose their organic status if PFAS chemicals are found on their farms. This could happen from prior use or from these potential pathways of contamination.

About 8% of the 14,000 pesticides currently registered for sales and use in Maryland are actually pesticides that have a PFAS chemical as their active ingredient and are considered PFAS by the US EPA as identified as such on EPA's [CompTox Chemicals Dashboard](#). HB1190 bans these pesticides for sales and use in our state. Given that there are hundreds of alternatives for each of these roughly 1,000 PFAS pesticide products Maryland registers, HB1190 is a reasonable small step that will protect the health of people who eat the food we grow and our families who live on the land, and will lower the level of farmland exposed to PFAS contamination from pesticides. No testing is required for this bill, as these products are EPA identified PFAS and their PFAS active ingredients are listed on product labels.

More than 50 Maine farms were found to be highly contaminated from toxic PFAS, including Misty Brook Farm, an organic dairy that fed its cows organic hay that was unknowingly PFAS contaminated. [Maine had to establish a 60 million dollar PFAS fund to financially assist farms devastated by losses of income from PFAS contamination of their farmlands and animals](#). Maine is likely the first of many states that will need to address PFAS contamination of its farmland. We want Maryland to avoid this horrific outcome of its policies.

Of course, not only are pesticides that contain PFAS a threat to farming, they are a health threat to Marylanders who consume PFAS contaminated food or are exposed environmentally to these pesticides. This is a growing concern for Maryland's residents, given that PFAS findings and concerns are in the news regularly.

PFAS pesticides are also used in hospitals, homes, and businesses, as well as outdoors on our lawns and parks. PFAS has been found in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, in surface water where millions of people get their drinking water, and in private wells. MDE is already issuing PFAS-based advisories on

many fish species, including and small mouth bass and other species frequently consumed by subsistence fishers.

There is nothing we can do about the PFAS already released onto Maryland farmland, but now that we are aware, and before we reach the point of PFAS toxicity in soil experienced elsewhere, it would be wise to eliminate this avoidable PFAS pesticide contamination source.

Agriculture is the number one industry in Maryland. We don't think it can continue to be number one if we lose our soil and farmland to PFAS contamination. There are hundreds of alternative inputs that the agriculture sector can—and *do*—use that don't contain PFAS chemicals as their active ingredients. All the agricultural products grown in Maryland can be grown without PFAS, as many of us are doing that now.

We urge a favorable report on HB1190 for the sake of our farms, our farmer families, and all Marylanders who depend on us for their food.

Respectfully,

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