



HB386 - SUPPORT

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Rachel Carson Council's Support for HB 386: Pesticides - PFAS Chemicals - Prohibitions

Health and Government Operations Committee Meeting

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Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison, and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee,

On behalf of The Rachel Carson Council, a national environmental justice nonprofit organization headquartered in Maryland and with a robust Maryland campus network, we urge a favorable report on HB0386 as a straightforward step to reduce Marylanders' exposure to PFAS.

It was Rachel Carson who said "The real wealth of the Nation lies in the resources of the earth—soil, water, forests, minerals, and wildlife." At the time, her cautionary words in *Silent Spring* successfully warned us about the pesticide DDT. If Carson were alive today, she would undoubtedly speak out against the parallel threat of PFAS "forever pesticides"—in Maryland and beyond—which could exacerbate damage to water, soil systems, and the human body. Even low exposure levels to PFAS have been linked to kidney, breast, testicular, and prostate cancer, birth defects, impaired immune function, and other chronic conditions.

The RCC has singled out this particular bill to support because its simple, actionable phaseout of PFAS-pesticide sales in Maryland reflects similar historical common-sense prohibitions on chlorpyrifos, lead, asbestos, DDT, and other toxic pervasive agents.

Of the approximately 14,000 pesticides registered for sale in Maryland each year, we know that approximately 1,000 contain PFAS as an active ingredient. Animal studies and in vitro human cell studies have identified toxic health effects from PFAS-pesticides, including those approved for use in MD. There has been no further research on whether combining PFAS with pesticides can specifically interact with, or amplify, pesticides' adverse health effects. Yet these PFAS-pesticides are used in Maryland's most susceptible populations: schools, healthcare facilities, individual homes and drinking water taps, and in agriculture. PFAS contamination endangers children, pregnant women, families, and the elderly—the very people Rachel Carson spoke up for.

HB386 gradually phases out the sale of known PFAS-containing "forever pesticides" in MD. Several years is a reasonable timeline, and the bill requires no lab testing. Ultimately, it affects only 8% of pesticides in MD. There are hundreds of already-registered alternatives to replace each of their uses.

It is unfair to Marylanders to postpone the PFAS issue when remediation technologies are so expensive, and limited. In fact, there is no way to remove short-chain PFAS found in PFAS-pesticides from water. It is up to either state legislatures or the federal government to regulate. Unfortunately, unlike the era in which Rachel Carson catalyzed a ban on DDT, the federal government is currently unraveling, shrinking, and potentially cutting hundreds of millions of dollars in EPA budget. Meanwhile, PFAS remains a priority for the American public: nearly every U.S. resident now carries measurable levels of PFAS in their blood, and a 2024 [poll](#) found that 51% of all likely voters are “very concerned” about long term exposure to PFAS.

If, as Rachel Carson said, the real wealth of this nation lies in its natural resources, where would Maryland’s wealth lie? In the rich Chesapeake Bay watershed? In our \$600 million dollar seafood industry? In the over 5 million residents served by public drinking water systems?

In Carson’s legacy—and in response to the voices of young people RCC serves across the state of Maryland—we must pass policies like HB386.

Please pass HB386 as a reasonable and important solution to simply “turn off the tap” and protect Marylanders from the health impacts of active-ingredient PFAS-pesticides.

The Rachel Carson Council urges a favorable report.

“Have we fallen into a mesmerized state that makes us accept as inevitable that which is inferior or detrimental, as though having lost the will or the vision to demand that which is good?” –Rachel Carson
