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Committee: Health and Government Operations

Testimony on: HB 570 Pesticides – Mosquito Control Products and PFAS Chemicals

Position: Support

Hearing Date: March 2, 2022

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club strongly supports HB 0570, which would prohibit the State, local governments, certified applicators, or people working under certified applicators from using mosquito control products that contain Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) chemicals after December 31, 2022. The bill also would require distributors to register each brand or pesticide product name with the Department of Agriculture (MDA). Finally, the bill would require the submission of an affidavit to the Secretary of Agriculture explaining whether a pesticide contains PFAS chemicals as an active or inert ingredient or if it has ever been stored or distributed in a container with PFAS chemicals.

PFAS are artificial substances that have been used in thousands of products since the 1940s. PFAS can be found in many household and personal care products, food packaging, and even food itself (such as dairy products from cows exposed to PFAS). PFAS can travel easily through the environment and break down extremely slowly. This can lead to PFAS in public water systems and private wells. PFAS can also contaminate soil and water near landfills, hazardous waste sites, and manufacturing or chemical production facilities that use or produce PFAS.

Current research suggests that continued exposure to PFAS can lead to numerous harmful health effects. Since PFAS do not break down easily, they can accumulate over time in the human body. PFAS can lead to reproductive issues, delayed development in children, increased risk of certain cancers, increased cholesterol levels, hormonal effects, and immunosuppression. However, because there are thousands of PFAS it is difficult to determine precisely how each one impacts human health.¹ Pesticides without PFAS are currently available. In the spring of 2021, the MDA switched products to use one that did not contain PFAS for use in its truck based spraying for mosquito control.²

Maryland should take action to protect our most vulnerable populations (children and pregnant women) from the known and unknown public health impacts of PFAS. There are already 72 PFAS regulations in 28 states.³ Maryland should be the next in passing strong legislation to ban these dangerous forever chemicals. We urge a favorable report.

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¹ <https://www.epa.gov/pfas/our-current-understanding-human-health-and-environmental-risks-pfas>

² Timothy B. Wheeler, “Forever chemicals’ found in mosquito spray” *The Bay Journal*, May 26, 2021, https://www.bayjournal.com/news/pollution/forever-chemicals-found-in-mosquito-spray/article_f159caae-be44-11eb-a307-136f1e350242.html

³ <https://www.saferstates.com/toxic-chemicals/pfas/>

Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America’s oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.