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Diverse Coalition to Testify in Support of Mandatory Pesticide Reporting

Farmers, public health and environmental professionals, moms and watermen favor legislation requiring pesticide applicators to report to a centralized database

(Annapolis, MD) – Farmers, public health and environmental professionals, moms, watermen and other advocates will testify today before the House Environmental Matters Committee in favor of the Pesticide Reporting and Information Act (House Bill 775/Senate Bill 675). The bipartisan bill, sponsored by Delegate Stephen Lafferty and 14 colleagues, would create a simple and cost-neutral, centralized online pesticide reporting database accessible to public health and environmental experts. The bill is one of the environmental community's top priorities for the 2013 General Assembly session.

The bill would require pesticide applicators, as well as sellers of restricted-use pesticides, to report information they are already required to maintain. Homeowners would not be affected. System setup and maintenance costs would be covered by a modest increase in existing annual product registration fees borne by chemical manufacturers.

Among those to testify in favor of the bill are Dr. Richard L. Humphrey, a Johns Hopkins physician and Associate Professor of Pathology who specializes in oncology. Humphrey -- who has served on several national task forces for cancer education and is knowledgeable about the links between pesticide exposure, cancer and lymphomas -- believes that, without pesticide reporting, "research and citizens' right to know is seriously handicapped."

"Unfortunately pesticides do not restrict their harmful effects to their intended targets nor are humans somehow magically immune from serious harm," Dr. Humphrey said. "This legislation would create an invaluable tool."

Exposures to pesticides are linked to many chronic illnesses, including asthma, autism spectrum disorders, ADHD, cancer, and Parkinson's disease, as well as to birth defects and fertility problems.

Jessica Pachler, an Annapolis resident and mother of three, will testify about her concerns about how pesticides may harm her and her young sons. "I do not support over-reaching regulations and big government," she said. "But I do support information – and this bill provides that – it gives the information needed so that the research can be done and so that we can each make our own informed, practical decisions."

Pesticides are particularly dangerous for children. A growing body of scientific evidence links pesticides to adverse health impacts on children's neurological, respiratory, immune, and endocrine systems – even at low exposure levels. In November 2012 the American Academy of Pediatrics issued its first policy statement aimed at minimizing pesticide exposure in children and identifying the need for public health tracking of pesticides.

The recent Maryland Environmental Health Network's [progress report on children's environmental health](#) also underscored the need to track pesticide use in assessing potential linkage to childhood disorders including cancer, autism, birth defects, asthma and developmental disorders.

Also scheduled to testify is Holly Heintz Budd, a farmer from Sunderland who supports the availability of application information to scientists. "We as farmers want to know -- for our own family's health as well as the health of our neighbors -- if anything I am using or they are using might be linked to a serious health impact," she said. Budd believes that the online reporting system will streamline the reporting process, saying, "this bill will also make it easier for farmers and pesticide applicators to record pesticide use."

Larry Simns, president of the Maryland Watermen's Association, said: "We have long supported this kind of legislation because of the stress and impacts of pesticides on the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem, and consequently, on the fisheries commercial watermen harvest. Every effort is needed to control pesticide use and this bill will just further protect one of America's most precious natural resources."

A recent federal report, [Toxic Contaminants in the Chesapeake Bay and its Watershed](#), confirms the need for more pesticide information in Maryland. The report details which pesticides are widespread in the Bay watershed and others for which there is insufficient data.

According to recent [statewide polling](#), eight in 10 voters are concerned about the risk of pesticides to their families' health, and a large majority (82 percent) favors making commercial pesticide use reporting mandatory. Nearly 5,000 Marylanders have signed petitions asking Governor O'Malley and the General Assembly to pass the Pesticide Reporting and Information Act.

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The Smart on Pesticides Maryland – For Safe Waters & Healthy Kids campaign is a coalition of concerned Maryland citizens working to pass legislation creating a simple and cost-neutral, centralized online pesticide reporting database in 2013.

Smart on Pesticides is part of the Pesticides and the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Project, which was established in 2007 by the Maryland Pesticide Network and the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future. It is the first working group in Maryland dedicated to reducing the occurrence and risks of pesticides in the Bay watershed, in order to protect water quality, aquatic life, wildlife and public health. Project participants include scientists, public health experts, waterkeepers, watermen, representatives of the agricultural and pest management industries, and environmental organizations.