



HB0386 - Pesticides – PFAS Chemicals – Prohibitions

Hearing date February 12, 2025

Position: FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Pena-Menlyk and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee:

Waterkeepers Chesapeake and the organizations signed below respectfully requests that this committee give a FAVORABLE report for HB386 - Pesticides – PFAS Chemicals – Prohibitions. Waterkeepers Chesapeake is a coalition of Waterkeeper programs across the Chesapeake and Coastal Bays region that work with their communities to protect local waterways. HB386 is a commonsense bill that prohibits sales of pesticides in Maryland that have PFAS listed as an active ingredient. This bill impacts less than 8% of pesticides sold in Maryland. The phasing in of the prohibition will allow time to find alternative products, and will not cause hardship as there are plenty of alternative products available.

Maryland registers over 14,000 pesticides annually and over 1,000 contain toxic forever chemicals as their active ingredient. A class of fluorinated chemicals, PFAS are known as forever chemicals because they bioaccumulate and take thousands of years to break down in the environment. These pesticides are used liberally in agriculture, homes, emergency rooms, health care facilities, and schools — among people who are already vulnerable. There is no research on the synergistic effects of combining these forever chemicals with toxic pesticides that already have adverse health impacts.

PFAS remediation is a massive problem and emerging technologies are limited and extremely expensive. These heavy costs will ultimately fall on communities, counties, and states. PFAS are already in our drinking water, in our rivers and streams, and in our soil, food, and bodies. In water quality sampling conducted in 2022 by Waterkeepers in the Chesapeake Bay and Coastal Bays regions, 39 samples were taken in rivers and streams. In 100% of the samples, levels of PFAS were found. Maryland has issued fish consumption warnings for PFAS in 15 fish species. Testing has found PFAS in drinking water from household taps in Maryland's Montgomery County and other locations around the state. Nearly every U.S. resident now carries measurable levels of PFAS in their blood. Every exposure adds to the impact on our body.

It's more important than ever for states to take strong action to protect people, farmworkers, water, food and lands from the toxic forever chemicals. Farmworkers and rural communities are most at risk to pesticide drift. There are efforts to have the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) block state and local pesticides laws and ordinances. Some members of Congress have proposed bills and amendments which, if enacted on their own or as part of a Farm Bill, would block states and local governments from setting their own pesticide standards for pesticides such as glyphosate, paraquat, and neonicotinoids.

It's time for Maryland to act to turn off this source of PFAS and protect the health and safety of Marylanders, protect our farmland and water, and reduce the astronomical costs states and towns are bearing to clean up the PFAS crisis.

Waterkeepers Chesapeake and the clean water organizations signed below urge this committee to help stop the proliferation of forever chemicals in Maryland, and give a FAVORABLE report for HB386.

Respectfully,
Robin Broder, Acting Executive Director
Waterkeepers Chesapeake
robin@waterkeeperschesapeake.org

Alice Volpitta, Baltimore Harbor Waterkeeper
Blue Water Baltimore

Ben Ford, Miles-Wye Riverkeeper
ShoreRivers

Sara Caldes, Severn Riverkeeper
Chesapeake Rivers Association, Inc.

Evan Isaacson, Senior Attorney, Director of Research
Chesapeake Legal Alliance