



Testimony of the Environmental Priorities Coalition

Supporting LD 125

An Act To Prohibit the Aerial Spraying of Glyphosate and Other Synthetic Herbicides for the Purpose of Silviculture

Before the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee

March 2, 2021

Good morning Senator Dill, Representative O’Neil, and members of the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee. My name is Beth Ahearn and I offer testimony on behalf of the Environmental Priorities Coalition (EPC). The EPC is a partnership of thirty-two conservation, environmental, and public health organizations who unify around a common agenda every year. The EPC represents over 100,000 members in Maine who want to protect the good health, good jobs, and quality of life that depend upon a healthy environment. LD 125 is one of the priority bills for our coalition this year.

Forestry herbicides threaten public health, ecological systems, and local farms. Maine’s largest landowner, Irving, routinely uses aerial spraying of hazardous chemicals to manage the growth of trees they harvest. Glyphosate, the most commonly used herbicide in forest management, is linked to serious health impacts. The International Agency of Research on Cancer (an agency within the World Health Organization) published a study in 2015 that determined glyphosate is a probable human carcinogen. <https://www.iarc.who.int/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/MonographVolume112-1.pdf>. It is the main ingredient in ‘Round Up’ and multiple studies have found that, in addition to cancer, it may cause chromosomal damage, harm fetal

development, reduce liver and kidney function, and lead to endocrine disruption. 10 countries have outright banned glyphosate and many more have restrictions. <https://sustainablepulse.com/2019/05/28/glyphosate-herbicides-now-banned-or-restricted-in-17-countries-worldwide-sustainable-pulse-research/#.YD2sfOhKhPa>. Vermont banned all herbicide spraying for forestry in 1997. [You can read more about that here in a blog by my colleague, Stacie Haines](#). This is bad stuff. But it is sprayed, from the sky, over very large tracts of land.

Glyphosate places wildlife at danger, too. The U.S. EPA has found that glyphosate likely threatens nearly every animal and plant species (93%) on the U.S. list of threatened and endangered species.

<https://www.epa.gov/endangered-species/draft-national-level-listed-species-biological-evaluation-glyphosate#executive-summary>

Finally, herbicide spray drift can travel great distances and threaten the health and economic livelihood of organic farmers. Contaminated produce cannot be marketed as organic, and farm families whose land is contaminated by pesticide drift must surrender their organic certification for three years, through no fault of their own. This happened to organic potato farmer Jim Gerritson, whom you heard from today.

Unfortunately, Maine's reliance on herbicides for forestry management is increasing. In 2018, acres of Maine forest sprayed with aerial herbicides exceeded the eleven-year average by 69%, according to the Maine Forest Service spray data analyzed by Mitch Lansky:

https://www.maine.gov/dacf/mfs/publications/annual_reports.html

It is incredible that the state hired Irving's forester to conduct an "independent" assessment of pesticide/herbicide use by industrial landowners. Irving, the industrial landowner that uses more glyphosate than all the other landowners combined. It is incredible that the state argues that clearcutting is a necessary scientific silviculture practice when it does employ this practice on state owned property.

Glyphosate causes harm, and its use is increasing. It is time to stop the trend and ban spraying of glyphosate and other synthetic herbicides.

Please vote Ought to Pass on LD 125.