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Testimony of Representative Vicki Doudera presenting
LD 316, "An Act To Prohibit the Use of Chlorpyrifos"
before the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

Good morning Senator Dill, Representative O'Neil, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. My name is Vicki Doudera, and I represent House District 94, which includes Camden, Islesboro and Rockport. I am here today to present **LD 316, An Act To Prohibit the Use of Chlorpyrifos.**

How often do you hear this phrase? *The worst of the worst.* That is how you will hear chlorpyrifos, an organophosphate pesticide, described today in testimony by Professor Sharon Tisher, a retired attorney who has taught environmental law and policy at the University of Maine for 26 years.

Indeed, years of research has proven chlorpyrifos to be dangerous, causing adverse impacts on our environment, our health, and our food system. A report issued in December of 2020 by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency reveals that the only residue of concern for the USDA's Pesticide Data Program monitoring food residues is chlorpyrifos. The report further states that residues of chlorpyrifos are turning up in drinking water. The EPA report lists the living creatures most in danger of this pesticide's toxic qualities. In addition to mammals, bees, amphibians, birds and fish are very young humans -- infants and children -- and women in their childbearing years, along with occupational handlers who mix, load, and or apply pesticide products containing chlorpyrifos, as they may be exposed dermally or by inhalation.

This is terrible stuff -- especially damaging to the developing brains of our kids -- and its residential indoor use was banned by the EPA in 2000. In July 2015, the federal government proposed a ban on chlorpyrifos everywhere after reviewing multiple research studies, partly funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, highlighting the substance's negative impacts. Despite the overwhelming evidence from its own agency, the federal government reversed the proposed ban in 2017.

That decision meant that chlorpyrifos has continued to be applied here in Maine, largely in the agriculture community. It's used on produce that we eat, such as cranberries and broccoli, and on holiday items we buy, such as Christmas trees and wreaths. It's used on some of the golf courses where you might spend a summer afternoon, and on the ornamental plants you might purchase at a greenhouse. You and I might encounter this chemical only casually, but because of their direct handling of the substance and crops that come into contact with chlorpyrifos, Maine farmers, farm workers and their families are particularly vulnerable to this neurotoxic pesticide's negative impacts.

In June 2018, Hawaii became the first state to ban chlorpyrifos. In May of 2019, California followed suit. In August of that same year, the European Food Safety Authority announced a ban on the sale of chlorpyrifos, and in December of 2019, the European Union also announced a ban. That same month, New York became the third U.S. state to ban all uses of chlorpyrifos by 2021. In June of 2020, Maryland also adopted regulations to ban and phase out uses of chlorpyrifos, and Oregon is on track to do so as well.

Maine also can be a leader in this regard. LD 316 would prohibit the use of chlorpyrifos in our state beginning in 2022, allowing limited exemptions for one year. From January 1 to December 31, 2022, LD 316 allows the Board of Pesticides Control to grant a temporary permit authorizing a pesticides applicator licensed by the State to use or apply a pesticide containing chlorpyrifos, as long as that licensed applicator possessed the pesticide in the State before January 1, 2022. This time period allows for a gradual phasing out of the substance for farmers who have already purchased it.

The science on this chemical is clear and unambiguous, and yet, unbelievably, you may hear today that chlorpyrifos can somehow be safe. Don't believe it. Chlorpyrifos damages the developing brains of children, causing decreased cognitive function, developmental delays, and learning disorders, and causes serious health problems in those who have been exposed to it. LD 316 offers an opportunity to protect Maine's farm families, environment, agricultural workforce, and food system from a dangerous pesticide that can have lifelong negative impacts.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration. I'm happy to answer any questions and provide additional information for your upcoming work session.

NOTES/SOURCES

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