

Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
c/o Clerk Cheryl McGowan
Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Cross Building, Room 214, 287-1312
Augusta, ME 04333

March 3, 2021

Dear, Senator Jim Dill, Chair & The Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee—

I am writing to you today to declare that **I, Megan Westerlind (nee Rynne)**—a resident of Nobleboro, Maine, **support and approve of the passage of LD 125** – An Act To Prohibit the Aerial Spraying of Glyphosate and Other Synthetic Herbicides for the Purpose of Silviculture, sponsored by Senator Troy Jackson.

As MOFGA writes: “Forestry herbicides such as glyphosate threaten public health, ecological systems, and local farms—yet Maine’s largest forest landowners routinely use aerial spraying of these hazardous chemicals to manage their property. Banning this practice will encourage a shift toward more ecologically friendly forestry management.”

I actually urge you to go further and consider banning the application of Glyphosate entirely for any commercial or private residence in the State of Maine.

Monsanto, now owned by Bayer, has lost significant legal cases in the past two years as the empirical evidence demonstrating the negative impacts on human health, specifically as an acute cause of cancer, mounts. Monsanto/Bayer owes over \$12 BILLION dollars in pay outs and this is just the beginning. No longer can they and we pretend that “we just don’t know.” We do know. Glyphosate is poisonous to humans and other creatures alike.

My husband and I moved here to Maine as a part of the ‘COVID-19-exodus’ so-to-speak, and because we Zoom-viewed the property and put an offer in before we set foot upon the area in real life, we were too late to notice the tree farm near us. I also was not aware of the statewide “forestry” practice of spraying trees with herbicides from the air until after we purchased our home and read Bernd Heinrich’s *A Year in the Maine Woods*. I have farmed organically and worked for an organic Christmas tree farm and 200+ acre forestry operation in Massachusetts. The natural methods of pest and weed control ARE feasible and possible. And, such thoughtful and conscientious and skillful professional practices do not jeopardize the health of the children and adults that live near such establishments. In fact, organic tree rearing and growing increases employment opportunities and keeps dollars local upon which 58% of locally spent dollars stay in the community like, for example on sheet mulching straw from local farmers, cultivation mower equipment and repair from local tractor mechanics, human powered labor v. only 33% if spent nationally or internationally, like for example, on Glyphosate products (Martin & Patel, 2011).

I was recently on the phone with a sales agent for a whole-house water treatment system. When I said that I lived in Maine, the agent exclaimed: “What a beautiful state you have there!” I had to agree but also needed him to know that this is a state within which peoples spray invisible, cancer-causing

chemicals from planes in the skies and upon the ground, indiscriminately on trees because there has been no societal nor legal consequences nor motivation not to—up until now.

Similarly, my friend from DC shared her glee when I told her that there is a tree farm down the road. But as I realized she was unaware of what that might signify, I warned her that unless explicitly stated as “organic” or “no spray,” the tree she buys for December would be statistically likely to have been sprayed with toxic chemicals.

According to Dr. Nathan Donley (2019), “The most recent data we’ve got are from a USDA survey of Christmas tree growers in six states (Oregon, Michigan, Pennsylvania, California, Florida and Texas, accounting for 63 percent of Christmas trees produced in the United States) on their pesticide-use patterns back in 2009. From this we know that Christmas trees in these six states are sprayed with 270,000 pounds of pesticides each year. And it’s not just the quantity of pesticides used that’s concerning, but also the type. Eighty-five percent of the use is made up of eight pesticides: chlorothalonil, atrazine, simazine, glyphosate, hexazinone, carbaryl, chlorpyrifos and dimethoate” (“Are Christmas Trees Sprayed with Pesticides?” Retrieved on 1 March 2021 from www.medium.com).

Alternatives exist: black sheet mulch, mow-weeding, hand weeding and laying straw are all possibilities for organic models to control the competition from other herbaceous and woody shrubs and grasses near the tree commodities. I hope these organic and skillful methods are what this nearby grower employs.

Please pass this bill. Make Maine a truly beautiful place beyond the tangible concreteness of ocean and mountains and beaches and trees; make this a state that is a leader in mitigating and preventing the harm of invisible human-made and deployed toxins so that I truly can brag about having moved here.

Respectfully,

Megan B. Rynne

Resident of Nobleboro, Maine

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