



Solutions for a
Toxic-Free Tomorrow

Testimony of Sarah Woodbury, Director of Advocacy, Defend Our Health
In Support of 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 Sarah Woodbury. I am the director of advocacy for Defend Our Health, formerly the Environmental Health Strategy Center. Defend Our Health’s mission is to make sure that everyone has equal access to safe food and drinking water, healthy homes and products that are toxic-free and climate friendly. I am here to testify in support of LD 125 “An Act To Prohibit the Aerial Spraying of Glyphosate and Other Synthetic Herbicides for the Purpose of Silviculture”

LD 125 would prohibit the aerial application of glyphosate or other synthetic herbicides for the purpose of silviculture. Aerial herbicides like glyphosate are used by many forest landowners in Maine to manage the growth, composition and quality of trees on their land.

The most commonly used of the herbicides in forest management is Glyphosate. Glyphosate is linked to serious health impacts. A study in 2019 found links between Glyphosate exposure and increased risk of non-hodgkins lymphoma¹. As reported in CNN, the researchers found that ““All of the meta-analyses conducted to date, including our own, consistently report the same key finding: exposure to GBHs (glyphosate-based herbicides) are associated with an increased risk of NHL...”.”² A 2020 study published in Microbiome indicated that “chronic exposure to concentrations of Roundup and glyphosate well below the approved regulatory threshold causes embryonic developmental failure and alteration of metabolic pathways via direct effect on the host and indirect effect on the gut microbiota in the keystone grazer Daphnia. As Daphnia is central to the food web of aquatic ecosystems and an indicator of ecosystem health, the weedkiller can potentially impose a fitness burden on freshwater aquatic foodwebs, affecting their ability to deliver critical ecosystem services (e.g., clean water, nutrient cycling).”³ Herbicide spray drift can travel great distances – even miles – and threaten the health and economic livelihood of surrounding communities and farmland. As the above-mentioned studies show, exposure to these chemicals by those communities can cause significant health impacts. For organic farmers near aerial spraying areas, it can impact their livelihood.

¹ Zhang L, Rana I, Shaffer RM, Taioli E, Sheppard L. Exposure to glyphosate-based herbicides and risk for non-Hodgkin lymphoma: A meta-analysis and supporting evidence. *Mutat Res*. 2019 Jul-Sep;781:186-206. doi: 10.1016/j.mrrev.2019.02.001. Epub 2019 Feb 10. PMID: 31342895; PMCID: PMC6706269.

² Dixon, E. (2019, February 15). Common weed Killer GLYPHOSATE increases cancer risk BY 41%, study says. Retrieved February 28, 2021, from <https://www.cnn.com/2019/02/14/health/us-glyphosate-cancer-study-scli-intl>

³ Suppa, A., Kvist, J., Li, X. et al. Roundup causes embryonic development failure and alters metabolic pathways and gut microbiota functionality in non-target species. *Microbiome* 8, 170 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40168-020-00943-5>



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.

Maine forestry programs need to minimize reliance on pesticides. Since 1989, state policy has required agencies involved in pesticide use and regulation to promote the principles and the implementation of integrated pest management and other science-based technology to do just that, yet 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%.

LD 125 will ban the aerial spraying of glyphosate and other synthetic herbicides and encourage a shift toward more ecologically friendly forestry practices. The science is clear on the health impacts of exposure to these toxic chemicals. Forestry programs need to move away from the use of these chemicals. Passage of LD 125 would help protect the health of all Mainers. Therefore, we urge the committee to vote unanimously "ought to pass" on LD 125.

Thank you.