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Oregon House Passes Healthy Kids & Farmworkers Act *Legislation rolls out protections from dangerous pesticide chlorpyrifos*

SALEM, Ore. – Legislation to protect Oregonians from the dangerous effects of the pesticide chlorpyrifos passed the Oregon House of Representatives today.

The Healthy Kids and Farmworkers Act, House Bill 4109, prohibits aerial spraying in close proximities of schools and requires that workers cannot enter an area until eight days after chlorpyrifos application. It phases out the sale and use of chlorpyrifos in Oregon starting in 2022 and bans the aerial application of chlorpyrifos.

Rep. Paul Holvey (D-Eugene) has long been a champion of legislation to clamp down on the use of the dangerous pesticide. A 2014 EPA assessment indicated that no amount of chlorpyrifos residue on foods would be considered acceptable.

“There is no safe level of chlorpyrifos exposure,” Rep. Holvey said. “Vulnerable communities, including children, pregnant women and farmworkers have already been devastated from the effects of pesticide poisoning. Oregon must join California, Hawaii and New York in protecting farmworkers and other Oregonians and banning the use of this dangerous chemical.”

Chlorpyrifos is also toxic to Oregon’s fish, bees, and wildlife, and has been found in many rivers where testing has occurred.

Rep. Teresa Alonso Leon (D-Woodburn), a chief sponsor of the legislation, talked about the impacts chlorpyrifos exposure is having on farmworkers in her community.

“As the daughter of farmworkers who, among many, toil in the fields, I know how hard this work is already,” Rep. Alonso Leon said. “Exposure to chlorpyrifos can have devastating and long-lasting health impacts on these hardworking Oregonians. We need laws that protect agricultural workers. We perform very important work and we deserve to have better and safer working conditions.”

Rep. Andrea Salinas (D-Lake Oswego), a chief sponsor of the legislation and the chair of the House Committee on Health Care, spoke to the cost to public health.

“The question we must ask ourselves today is whether we will prioritize the health of our farmers, workers, children and families, because ultimately, that is what this bill is about,” Rep. Salinas said. “Around the world and in other state capitals across our nation, people are raising concerns about the continued use of chlorpyrifos on our public health. Elected leaders are proposing solutions similar to this one. The European Union, Hawaii, California, and New York have already taken action, and it’s time we join them. Protecting the health of our children, workers, families and neighbors should never be a compromise.”

In addition to Rep. Holvey, Rep. Salinas, and Rep. Alonso Leon, Rep. Diego Hernandez (D-Portland), Rep. Rachel Prusak (D-West Linn), Rep. Marty Wilde (D-West Eugene and Junction City), Sen. Laurie Monnes Anderson (D-Gresham), Sen. Michael Dembrow (D-Portland), Sen. Lew Frederick (D-Portland), Sen. James Manning Jr. (D-Eugene), Sen. Floyd Prozanski (D-Eugene) and Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward (D-Portland). A group of 19 House and Senate Democrats signed on as regular sponsors.

The measure, which passed 32 to 24, now goes to the Oregon Senate for consideration.

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