



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

2/20/2020

Timothy G. Sekerak
Chief Clerk of the House
Oregon House of Representatives
State Capitol Building
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Vote Explanation on House Bill 4109

Dear Chief Clerk Sekerak,

I wish to file an explanation for my “aye” vote on House Bill 4109.

I struggled mightily in deciding how I would vote. Chlorpyrifos is not widely used in House District 32 because it's not generally a pesticide used in forestry and timber production. That said, it would be ignorant of me, coming from a district with working lands, to not know how especially important a tool chlorpyrifos is for farmers who grow specialty products, Christmas trees, blueberries, apples, hazelnuts, and other crops. With Christmas trees especially, the product when exported needs to be free of pests, otherwise the product will not be accepted into foreign ports. Immediately taking away a tool used by farmers could be devastating to their industries.

On the other hand, however, I cannot consciously take a stance that seems to place business interests above human health and other environmental concerns. Significant research has been conducted on the substance that has found chlorpyrifos to be linked to brain damage in children, Parkinson's disease, autism, cancer, reduced IQ, attention deficit disorders, loss of working memory, and delayed motor skill development. In the environment, chlorpyrifos has negative impacts for birds, fish, and essential pollinators like bees. There is no safe level of exposure for pregnant women and their unborn babies, a point underscored by testimony provided in the House Healthcare Committee from female farmworkers who suffered miscarriages following exposure. End-chain consumers are at risk as well, with EPA scientific review showing that chlorpyrifos residue on food and in water supplies are present in levels unsafe to pregnant women and children.

I support that this bill puts into place immediate common-sense protections such as buffer zones, a ban on aerial spraying of chlorpyrifos to eliminate drift concerns, and requires that workers avoid a sprayed area for 8 days following application. The ban also moves forward with a two-year phase-out period to allow our farmers time to explore substitutes to the product. Additionally, a work group helmed by the Oregon Department of Agriculture with a broad group of stakeholders, in a process separate from this legislation, will also be able to help in that transition by identifying alternatives and helping farmers to remain productive and profitable during the phase-out and beyond.





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While we need to be cognizant of the needs of our farmers, we also need to prioritize the health of the workers who come into contact daily with the product (many of whom are people of color and immigrants), as well as consumers who come into contact with residue that might be on a food source or in the water supply. The evidence of harm is substantial, and several other states with large agricultural industries (California being the largest) have preceded Oregon in this decision, with many others evaluating their own proposals. This should signal to Oregon that we are not alone in recognizing the very real danger chlorpyrifos poses as a public health issue.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tiffany Mitchell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name and last name clearly distinguishable.

Representative Mitchell

