



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

February 20, 2020

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

RE: Vote Explanation for House Bill 4109

Dear Chief Clerk Sekerak,

Sometimes the bills we have the privilege of working on are straight forward/black & white, some of them have some curves and are shaded with grey. This bill was a little difficult for me. From the beginning, I have been very open with the Chief Co-Sponsors, with advocates, with farm workers, and district farmers. I am in support of having school buffer zones, banning of aerial spraying applications and having an eight-day no-contact rule in place for when workers can return to work after application. The issue from the beginning for me has been about the ban.

I understand that the health impacts of Chlorpyrifos are very real. Science overwhelmingly speaks to the health impacts. The largest producer of Chlorpyrifos in the United States has decided to discontinue the manufacturing of Chlorpyrifos, and this is good news. My main concern is we are not telling farmers or the public what the market will replace it with and what farmers will use in its place. The agriculture industry may be forced to use a product that has more damaging consequences or their only alternative may be a product that is more expensive.

I met with farmers from my district several times. I even rode during harvest in a combine with Amy, who lives and works in House District 30. I heard their concerns. They explained the limited tools they must use to combat pests and meet shipping requirements. Back in the day, farmers were permitted to burn their fields at the end of harvest and doing so would kill off pests and add nutrients to the soil. Burning fields after harvest is no longer permitted and farmers are left to find other means to address the increasingly resistant pests that damage their crops. They shared an example of what they would replace Chlorpyrifos with and its own health impacts. It is also twice as expensive and must be applied twice. I worry that this bill gives false hope. It will have people feeling that they are safe, that we were effective in removing the harm of a terrible chemical. The truth is they have banned one chemical and others may surface to be used that have risks of their own.

I voted to advance the minority report because it did not create an outright ban, ultimately the motion failed. While I did vote yes for HB 4109 in the end, I am committed to asking for monetary help for farmers to help them in their transition, much like California has done. The cost impacts to farmers are real and we must do what we can to help them find a better means to address their pesticide-resistant pests.

Sincerely,


Representative Janeen Sollman

