



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

February 19, 2020

Dear Chief Clerk Sekerak,

I am writing to submit an explanation for my vote on House Bill 4109, and to explain my support for the minority report on that bill.

It is my role as a legislator to protect the public health of Oregonians. This is especially true when it comes to farmworkers and their families, who have often been treated as second-class citizens throughout our state's and our nation's history. It's also especially true for children and families in rural areas, who lack access to many services and protections that people in cities enjoy.

It is also my role as an elected Representative for House District 52 to protect the viability of the agricultural industry that sits at the center of the Columbia Gorge's regional economy. Farmers should be allowed access to tools that may be necessary in the event of pest emergencies. In fact, their livelihoods may be at stake under those circumstances if no viable alternative pesticides exist.

It is true that chlorpyrifos poses a threat to public health. That is why I strongly support efforts to limit its use to only emergency situations, as declared by the Oregon Department of Agriculture. I also support funding for training on applying chlorpyrifos to minimize public health risks; research into viable alternative chemistries that would not pose even greater risks to public health; and assistance for farmers who are able to transition away from the use of chlorpyrifos in favor of safer alternatives.

I made efforts to negotiate a compromise with the advocates for House Bill 4109 that would implement the crucial farmworker and public health protections proposed in the base bill, while doing away with the total ban in favor of allowing for limited uses during a quarantine, during infestations of invasive species that could not be treated using other chemicals, and also limited uses on crops for which no viable alternatives exist. I also suggested a confidential reporting option for farm workers exposed to illegal uses of chlorpyrifos, in order to increase enforcement capacities of our agencies. A minority report was submitted to the House of Representatives that reflected many of these proposed changes. I voted in favor of that report, but it was unfortunately not adopted by the House.

Farmers in my district take the public health challenges posed by chlorpyrifos seriously, and they claim they would welcome increased restrictions on its use for the sake of worker protection and environmental preservation. They also tell me that a total ban on the chemical without limited exceptions could pose a serious threat to their livelihoods during our increasingly fluctuating climates. The uncertainty of droughts, wildfires, hotter summers and colder winters threaten to introduce pests that have never before been seen in our state, the treatment of which might only be achieved through the use of chlorpyrifos.

I have considered my stance on this issue since the outset of the 2019 legislative session, and although it pains me to take a vote that may appear not to support public health protections, I made every attempt to



find a solution that would protect the public while also taking into account the continuing struggles of farmers in my district and their ability to keep their farms operating in the face of international trade complications, increasing administrative burdens, and climate change. I will continue to stand with farmworkers, nurses, educators, and public health providers on issues of public health as a rule. Unfortunately, the lack of attention to details (funding for a just transition, lack of exemptions for export requirements, and more) forced me to vote no on this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Anna Williams', with a stylized, flowing script.

Anna Williams
State Representative, House District 52