

Sayers, Margery

From: Plummer, David
Sent: Friday, November 1, 2019 5:36 PM
To: CouncilMail
Subject: Howard SCD comments on CB 51-2-19
Attachments: Bill 51-2019 Pesticides on County Property.pdf

Good Afternoon County Council Members and Staff,

The Howard Soil Conservation District Board of Supervisors would like to submit the attached letter as part of the public record for CB 51-2019. The Howard SCD Board appreciates your consideration of their concerns regarding this legislation.

I would also like to thank all of you that attended the Fall Farm and Conservation Tour on October 16th! We appreciate your engagement with the agricultural community and your interest in learning about the issues farmers face on a daily basis. We look forward to putting together a similar tour for you next year, just without all the rain! Regards – David

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October 28, 2019

Honorable Christiana Mercer Rigby
Howard County Council Chairperson
3430 Court House Drive
Ellicott City, MD 21043

Re: Bill No. 51-2019 Prohibiting the use of pesticides on County Property

Dear Council Chairperson Mercer Rigby,

The Howard Soil Conservation District Board of Supervisors would like to provide feedback regarding Bill No. 51-2019 related to pesticide/herbicide use on County property. The Board commends the County on their efforts to better manage pesticide applications using integrated pest management (IPM) techniques. Farmers have successfully implemented these principles for many decades to protect our food supply. While we recognize that this bill pertains specifically to County owned buildings and property, we do have some concerns that this legislation could be applied more broadly in the future, potentially limiting the options available to control noxious weeds and invasive pests.

The three chemical compounds listed in this bill represent valuable tools for defending our food supply against a variety of insect and plant threats. In fact, entire cropping systems that produce the majority of our grain in Maryland are based on one of these chemicals. No-till farming and the ecological benefits associated with it, such as soil health and erosion prevention, would not be possible without the selective use of chemicals. Howard County farmers strive to use all chemicals judiciously, effectively, and conscientiously. These compounds are expensive, and already controlled under strict State and Federal guidelines.

One of our biggest concerns is that this policy or similar legislation would be applied more broadly in the future to include private land. Farmers already face a number of challenges in managing the insect, plant, and disease pests that impact their crops. Preventing the migration of weeds and pests onto agricultural land and controlling weeds that are considered noxious and invasive by the Maryland Department of Agriculture requires constant vigilance. There are also a variety of conservation practices that farmers undertake to meet the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan goals that require the use of pesticides. Limiting the options available to farmers for addressing weeds and pests could have significant unintended consequences on economic and environmental aspects of agricultural operations in Howard County, and could put our farmers at a distinct disadvantage to producers in surrounding counties.

The Howard SCD Board of Supervisors respectfully ask the County Council to carefully consider the potential unintended consequences associated with this legislation. Without knowing what future plant and insect pests could invade our fields, forests or farms it is difficult to predict which of these chemical resources may be needed for controlling these threats.

We appreciate your consideration of our concerns regarding this bill, and we request that you include the Howard SCD in future discussions related to this policy.

Sincerely,

Justin Brendel, Chair
Howard SCD Board of Supervisors