



2/21/2020

Senator Dembrow, Chair

Vice-Chair Baertschiger

Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources , Members

Re: Testimony in Support of HB 4109

Dear Senator Dembrow, Vice-chair Baertschiger and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jeff Anderson, a I write to you today on behalf of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Union Local 555. We represent over 25,000 workers in Oregon and Southwest Washington in several industries, including retail, meatpacking, healthcare, and more. UFCW Local 555 workers are a diverse group that have grown into the largest private sector labor union in Oregon, and we are proud to be a strong collective voice for working people.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of HB 4109 to protect the health of Oregon, farmworkers and rural communities by phasing out chlorpyrifos in our state, a neurotoxin with devastating effects on child development.

We at UFCE Local 555 understand this to be a clear public health issue, and it is essential to protect and improve the lives of our workers and community. Research shows that the use of chlorpyrifos in our state puts the health of our children, pregnant mothers, farmworkers and rural communities at risk. We believe that farming practices and protecting the lives of our workers should not be at odds. Safer farming practices can be instituted that can improve the working & living conditions of all.

The safety of our workers and our communities should be a top priority and the use of chemicals that are clearly harmful to them should be avoided. Chlorpyrifos is from a family of chemicals – organophosphates – that were used as neurotoxins in Germany during World War II. It is made up of white or colorless crystals and has a skunky odor. It can cause adverse health effects if touched, inhaled or eaten. Children’s health and brain function can be permanently and irreversibly harmed by exposure to neurotoxic pesticides such as chlorpyrifos, even at very low levels of exposure and even if this exposure happens before they are born. Farm workers are also at risk as they get exposed to chlorpyrifos when it is sprayed on crops like Christmas trees, grass seed fields, orchards, berries, hazelnuts, and much more. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) took action by banning

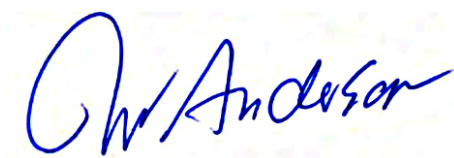
household use of Chlorpyrifos in 2001. For nearly two decades, the EPA has documented adverse effects of chlorpyrifos on the physical and mental development of infants and children. Citing risks to children, in 2001, the EPA banned most uses of chlorpyrifos in homes, schools, day care facilities, parks, hospitals, nursing homes, and malls, but they allowed continued use on farms. While farmers, farmworkers, and children in farming communities get the biggest doses of chlorpyrifos, people are exposed to chlorpyrifos through consuming contaminated food, drift and contaminated water sources.

HB 4109 proposes a sensible phase out on the use of chlorpyrifos that protects our children, agricultural workers and rural communities. HB 4109 would first prohibit aerial spraying of products that contain *only* chlorpyrifos. HB 4109 protects our children by prohibiting chlorpyrifos use within 300 feet of schools. And finally, HB 4109 adds stronger protections for farmworkers by instituting an 8-day re-entry period on fields that have been sprayed with chlorpyrifos. By January 1, 2022, the phase out comes into full effect by prohibiting sale, purchase or use of pesticide products containing chlorpyrifos. This 18 month phase out allows farmers and to adopt safer alternative pesticide practices that will improve farmworker and community health while helping farms maintain healthy soils.

We believe that these are reasonable steps for Oregon to take in response to the long-standing warnings that there are no safe levels of exposure to this extremely neurotoxic chemical.

HB 4109 is an important step in supporting both worker justice and overall public health. Our 25,000 members stand firmly with farm workers and our surrounding communities in calling for this important protection for a harmful neurotoxic chemical. Worker and Community safety shouldn't be an afterthought, it needs to be the first consideration when we determine what chemicals we are allowing into our ecosystem.

Sincerely,



Jeff Anderson
Secretary-Treasurer
UFCW Local 555