

Date: February 21, 2020

Subject: Support for H.B. 4109 The Healthy Kids and Farmworkers Act

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

My name is Arturo Ceballos and I have been working in Oregon agriculture for fourteen years- I have worked and lived in the Willamette Valley all these years. I perform various types of work from farm maintenance, crop pruning, ground control, fumigating crops, and many other types of work related to agriculture.

In recent years, I have worked on farms where I prune hazelnut trees. Chlorpyrifos are constantly used on those farms to kill insects while other hazardous chemicals are used to kill weeds. Every summer, the neighboring farm utilizes aircraft to spray pesticides and other chemicals on their crops. Heavy winds cause air to pick-up and bring those chemicals into our workplace. The strong smell of the chemicals cause me to feel severe nausea and irritation in my throat. On various occasions, I have experienced serious headaches.

One of the unsafe conditions I am exposed to is working with toxic chemicals like chlorpyrifos. I choose to describe these chemicals as “toxic” because many are used to kill insects, unwanted plants, and are used to control something unwanted. If these chemicals kill weeds, insects, and destroy land then imagine the harm it does to those of us who are exposed to such chemicals on a regular basis over long extended periods of time without even knowing. I can not imagine what the residue does when we bring it to our homes without knowing.

On another occasion, my right hand accidentally touched a pesticide used to control weeds when I grabbed it I threw it onto the floor. The odor was strong and unpleasant- in between acidic and sour. It was a matter of minutes until I began feeling dry throat, discomfort, and the strong urge to cough involuntarily. I would not like to get ill from these toxic chemicals because my income is not enough to cover a medical plan. I worry that in the future I will get sick with a serious illness caused by pesticides including chlorpyrifos. I worry that I will not be able to take care of my health nor my families’.

As agricultural workers, we contribute to the state economy and the production of the crops that are on everyone's table. Therefore, I would like working conditions to be safe and healthy just for my coworkers, our families, and I. Above all, I would like the workplace to be free from the risk of illness due to toxic chemicals like chlorpyrifos that endanger our health and that of our families and the way we live day to day. I urge your support in House Bill 4109.

Sincerely,

Arturo Ceballos