

"Representing the Agricultural Producers of Montgomery County"

The Honorable George Leventhal, President
Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, Maryland 20856

January 15, 2015

RE: Montgomery Agricultural Producers Written Testimony:
Bill 52-14 Pesticides-Notice Requirements-Non-Essential Pesticides-Prohibitions

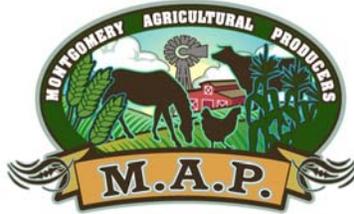
On behalf of Montgomery Ag Producers, please accept this correspondence as MAP's testimony in opposition to Bill 52-14, - Pesticides – Notice Requirements – Non- Essential Pesticides – Prohibitions. MAP is an organization of agricultural producers that range from grain to table top foods to equestrian and livestock producers here in the county. This legislation addresses the banning of certain pesticides that are currently used and approved for use by the EPA and the State of Maryland on Montgomery County properties.

While Bill 52-14 currently provides for an agricultural exemption, if this legislation is adopted, nothing prevents a future Council from amending the law to prohibit the use of certain pesticides on agricultural land despite being approved for use by State and Federal Government agencies. This is our concern with this bill.

This potential outcome is of great concern to the agricultural community. We in partnership with Montgomery County have worked to make the County's Ag Reserve a cherished resource. Our county's farmers utilize pesticides as a tool on a regular basis throughout the growing season to protect our crops from insects, disease and weed competition. It is the availability and use of these products that allow us to produce a safe and abundant food supply while protecting the Chesapeake Bay.

We take the safety of our citizens and especially the children seriously and commend you for your concern in this regard. We believe that properly tested and approved pesticides when used according to their label are safe. Those who apply agricultural pesticides are required to be trained to obtain a license and must partake in continuing education to maintain that license. Every product that we use is extensively tested as part of the approval process by the Environmental Protection Agency.

We are concerned about the term "Non-essential Pesticide." Who in the county has the expertise to decide which pesticides are non-essential and what criteria will be used to make these decisions? What are the proposed alternatives and will they truly be safer? We believe that, in order to have a fair and open discussion about banning certain pesticides, this legislation needs to be very specific about exactly which pesticides will be banned and where they would be banned. How will our parks and road departments continue their battle with noxious and invasive weeds including Canada thistle, Johnson grass, bamboo, ailanthus tree, mile-a-minute and kudzu?



"Representing the Agricultural Producers of Montgomery County"

While the bill's sponsors cannot guarantee what the future may hold for this legislation, and its impact on agricultural land, we can say with great certainty that the prohibition of products approved for agricultural use by the EPA and the State of Maryland could have devastating effects on the county's agricultural producers. For these reasons we suggest that this legislation be tabled until it can be studied further.

We in the Agricultural community have always appreciated the Council's support of farmers in the Agricultural Reserve. We've invited you to our farms so you can better understand farming and will continue to do so in the future. Your support is paramount in making it possible for us to continue to protect the Agricultural Reserve through modern farming practices. We hope that the Council will think of MAP as a leading source of information about Farming in Montgomery County.

Respectfully submitted,

Eric Spates
Montgomery Ag Producers board member

Cc; Montgomery County Farm Bureau
Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board
Agricultural Advisory Committee
Montgomery Countryside Alliance
Sugarloaf Citizens Association