

## Zawitoski, John

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**From:** Gillis, Chris  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 07, 2014 4:30 PM  
**To:** Criss, Jeremy  
**Subject:** Memo Requesting Briefing on Health Effects of Pesticides  
**Attachments:** pesticide\_memo\_8.7.14.pdf

Dear Jeremy,

Earlier today, Councilmember Leventhal sent the attached memo to Councilmember Berliner requesting a T&E committee briefing on the health effects of pesticide exposure. Please feel free to share this with stakeholders in the Ag community. If you have any questions, let me know.

I will be out of the office for a week beginning tomorrow so if I don't respond immediately, that's the reason why.

Best,

Chris Gillis  
Aide to Councilmember Leventhal  
240-777-7821



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL  
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

GEORGE LEVENTHAL  
COUNCILMEMBER  
AT-LARGE

MEMORANDUM

August 7, 2014

TO: Roger Berliner, Chair, T&E Committee

FROM: George Leventhal, Council Vice President *George Leventhal*

SUBJECT: Briefing on Pesticides

I am writing to request that the T&E committee hold a meeting this fall to continue the conversation the council began last year regarding pesticides and pesticide use in the county.

As you will recall, last fall, the T&E committee received a briefing from our Department of General Services, the Department of Parks, Montgomery County Public Schools and our Department of Environmental Protection on current agency practices as they pertain to pesticide use on county property and enforcement of county pesticide laws. We also heard from our neighbors in the City of Takoma Park and the District of Columbia on legislation recently enacted in those jurisdictions, placing restrictions on pesticides that may pose a health risk and are deemed non-essential for protecting public health or property.

Since that meeting, I circulated draft legislation affecting the application of these "non-essential" pesticides within the county, but which exempted agricultural uses, to both colleagues and stakeholders on this issue in order to solicit feedback. Among other things, the bill would have:

- Prohibited the application of certain pesticides on county-owned property managed by our Department of General Services;
- Prohibited the application of certain pesticides on the Parks Department's playgrounds and ball fields;
- Required the posting of a notice when a property owner applies pesticides to an area of more than 100 square feet on his or her own lawn;
- Required that a unit owner in a common ownership community be given the opportunity to "opt out" of the application of non-essential pesticides to the owner's unit;
- Required the application of certain pesticides to the common elements in a common ownership community to be approved each year by a majority of the owners voting; and
- Prohibited the application of certain pesticides to the lawn of a children's facility, family day care or school.

Subsequent to circulating the draft legislation, I met with a variety of stakeholders on both sides of the issue to listen to their concerns with the major provisions of the legislation. The feedback I received has been overwhelmingly unfavorable. Pesticide opponents feel the draft legislation doesn't go far enough to protect the public's health, while pesticide proponents, including some agricultural producers, believe that pesticides are safe and oppose any further restrictions placed on their usage.

After spending the better part of the last year immersing myself in the issue, it is my opinion that pesticides are, in fact, contributing to neurodevelopmental disorders and cancers in children. The developing brain is uniquely vulnerable. Chemicals can cause permanent brain damage in children even at low levels of exposure that would have little to no adverse effect in an adult.<sup>1</sup> The public is led to believe that if a pesticide is on store shelves, it must have undergone rigorous testing for potential effects to human and environmental health, but as the Government Accountability Office has found, this is often not the case.<sup>2</sup>

The American Academy of Pediatrics, the foremost organization committed to protecting the well-being of children, has issued a forceful statement on the dangers of pesticide exposure in children. It states that epidemiologic evidence demonstrates associations between early life exposure to pesticides and pediatric cancers, decreased cognitive function and behavioral problems.<sup>3</sup>

The National Institutes of Health links pesticide use to myriad health risks, especially in children. Exposure to certain pesticides has been linked to Parkinson's disease, diabetes, leukemia, lymphoma, lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, dementia, Alzheimer's disease, and variety of cancers including breast, colon, prostate and lung cancer.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to the harm that pesticides may be causing to humans, there is strong evidence that pesticides containing neonicotinoids are contributing to the decline in the bee population, which has been well publicized in recent years. A Harvard study published in May strengthens the link between neonicotinoid pesticides and the collapse of honey bee colonies.<sup>5</sup>

Another concern is the environmental impact of pesticide runoff on the region's waterways. A prime example of the human and environmental toll of pesticide runoff is occurring in the City of Toledo, which was forced to implement a multi-day water ban due to a toxic algae bloom on Lake Erie. The bloom is caused by pesticides and other chemicals that are affecting the natural grazers which would otherwise control algae growth, according to NOAA.<sup>6</sup>

Mounting research from these well respected institutions and organizations suggests to me that not enough is being done to protect the public's health when it comes to pesticides. With so many warning signs, I believe we must take a more precautionary approach to the use of pesticides within the county when there is still so much we don't know about them. Recognition that certain

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Phillippe Grandjean, MD, Dr. Phillip Landrigan, MD, *The Lancet Neurology*, Neurobehavioral Effects of Developmental Toxicity, Volume 13, Issue 3, 330-338, March 2014

<sup>2</sup> *United States Government Accountability Office*, Pesticides – EPA Should Take Steps to Improve its Oversight of Conditional Registrations, <http://www.gao.gov/assets/660/656825.pdf> (accessed August 3, 2014)

<sup>3</sup> *Pediatrics*, Pesticide Exposure in Children, Volume 130, No. 6, 1757 – 1763, December, 2012

<sup>4</sup> Jan Ehrman, *NIH Record*, Pesticide Use Linked to Lupus, Rheumatoid Arthritis, [http://nihrecord.nih.gov/newsletters/2011/03\\_18\\_2011/story4.htm](http://nihrecord.nih.gov/newsletters/2011/03_18_2011/story4.htm) (accessed August 3, 2014)

<sup>5</sup> *Bulletin of Insectology*, Sub-lethal exposure to neonicotinoids impaired honey bees winterization before proceeding to colony collapse disorder, Chensheng Lu, Kenneth M. Warchol, Richard A. Callahan, Volume 67, 125- 130, June 2014

<sup>6</sup> National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration, NOAA Great Lakes Research Laboratory, <http://www.glerl.noaa.gov/res/waterQuality/?targetTab=faq> (accessed August 3, 2014)

chemicals are toxic to human health often takes decades of research after the initial evidence is found. Similarly, chemicals that were once thought to be safe are later shown to be toxic at much lower exposure levels than had previously been thought to be safe.<sup>7</sup>

This is not to say that pesticides don't have any value; they do. They help farmers control pests that destroy crops, they help homeowners and our Parks Department deal with non-native invasive species, and they are invaluable to managing disease in trees and shrubbery. Any legislation which I introduce will still allow for these uses and others; however, I believe pesticides are also being applied in many non-essential situations with adverse impacts on vulnerable populations.

Since the field of pesticides is highly technical and because there is competing science on both sides of the issue, I strongly encourage county councilmembers to educate ourselves on the latest science so we can exercise our best judgment in determining whether additional restrictions are warranted. Science will never be able to answer conclusively all of our questions regarding effects of pesticides on the human body since complex interactions between multiple chemicals are involved, but science can help us better assess the risk to the public and aid us in determining if certain chemicals pose too great a risk to the health of our children.

I intend to introduce legislation in the coming months that addresses the use of non-essential pesticides, but I feel that another T&E committee meeting is an important precursor to the council considering any legislation. When legislation on pesticides is introduced at the council, councilmembers will be inundated with calls and emails from the public disputing the scientific basis for action on the local level. It is imperative that councilmembers be in a position to engage knowledgeably with their constituents on facts of the subject.

To the extent possible, I would like the committee to hear from experts, physicians and researchers in the field of pesticides on the following topics:

- Pesticide exposure in children and the potential effects on a child's mental and physical health;
- The effect of pesticide exposure in the elderly and whether seniors are at an increased risk when exposed to pesticides;
- The effect of pesticides on household pets;
- The effect of neonicotinoids pesticides on the bee population and other wildlife; and
- The effect of pesticides on water quality, both locally and regionally.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. If you have any questions regarding this request, feel free to contact my office at 240-777-7811.

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<sup>7</sup> Dr. Phillippe Grandjean, MD, Dr. Phillip Landrigan, MD, *The Lancet Neurology*, Neurobehavioral Effects of Developmental Toxicity, Volume 13, Issue 3, 330-338, March 2014