July 1, 2016

Mayor Jud Ashman  
City of Gaithersburg  
31 South Summit Avenue  
Gaithersburg, Maryland 20877-2038

Re: Urging Gaithersburg to Opt-in to MC Bill 52-14

Dear Mayor Jud Ashman:

On behalf of the members of Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility living and working in Gaithersburg, Maryland, I am writing to ask the City of Gaithersburg to opt-in to MC Bill 52-14, the Healthy Lawns Act. This bill would prohibit the use of certain lawn pesticides that are extremely dangerous to human health and establish posting notice requirements for the application of certain other law pesticides.

This bill will help protect the health of Gaithersburg residents, particularly its children. Although pesticides have benefits, exposure to certain pesticides can have serious adverse health effects on humans. These effects can range from simple irritation of the skin and eyes to nervous system disorders, immune system problems, and certain cancers. Children are more vulnerable to the harmful effects of pesticide exposure because their brains, nervous systems, and organs, including their liver and kidneys, are still developing after birth, they spend more time on the ground or near the ground, they take more breaths per minute, they have more skin surface relative to their body weight, and they put their hands in and around their mouth and nose more often than adults.

This bill is consistent with the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). AAP recommends limiting exposure of children to pesticides and using safer alternatives. Their policy position on pesticide exposure in children states, “Children encounter pesticides daily and have unique susceptibilities to their potential toxicity. Acute poisoning risks are clear, and understanding of chronic health implications from both acute and chronic exposure are emerging. Epidemiologic evidence demonstrates associations between early life exposure to
pesticides and pediatric cancers, decreased cognitive function, and behavioral problems.”¹

Jennifer Runkle, PhD, MSPH, writes in the Physicians for Social Responsibility’s Environmental Health Policy Institute forum² that, “In children, cancer cases have been indiscriminately associated with all pesticide classes. Recent meta-analytic findings demonstrate a more than two-fold excess risk of child leukemia among mothers occupationally exposed to insecticides and herbicides during pregnancy.³ Even more surprising are studies indicating a 50% increase in childhood leukemia risk following routine maternal pesticide use in the home or garden.⁴ Paternal occupational exposure to herbicides, fungicides and insecticides has also been positively associated with risk of child brain tumors.”⁵

This common sense bill would target the most dangerous pesticides and leave Gaithersburg residents with many safe alternatives. Specifically, the bill would designate non-essential pesticides to include those classified as "Carcinogenic to Humans" or "Likely to Be Carcinogenic to Humans" by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); all pesticides classified by the EPA as "Restricted Use Products;" all pesticides classified as "Class 9" pesticides by the Ontario, Canada, Ministry of the Environment; all pesticides classified as "Category 1 Endocrine Disruptors" by the European Commission; and any other pesticides which the Executive determines are not critical to pest management in the County.

On a personal note, I lived on the West Island of Montreal for 5 years where a pesticide ban was in place. The lawns and gardens in those communities were as nice and attractive as the finest lawns in Montgomery County. Instead of using

---


highly dangerous toxic chemicals to kill pests in their lawns, they were using safer and equally effective alternatives. We hope that Gaithersburg can do the same.

Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,

Timothy Whitehouse
Executive Director