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**Testimony submitted to the Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources,
March 26, 2019
SB 853**

We submit this testimony on behalf of our members and clients. The undersigned are a group of diverse organizations that focus on workers' rights.

Pesticide exposure causes farmworkers to suffer more chemical-related injuries and illnesses than any other workforce nationwide. Occupational exposure to pesticides poisons as many as 20,000 farmworkers every year, according to estimates by the EPA. The true numbers are likely much higher.

Farmworkers are exposed to pesticides in a variety of ways. Workers who perform hand labor tasks in treated areas risk exposure from direct spray, aerial drift, or contact with pesticide residues on the crop or soil. Workers who mix, load, or apply pesticides can be exposed to pesticides due to spills, splashes, and defective, missing or inadequate protective equipment.

Even when not working in the fields, farmworker families, especially children, are also at risk of elevated pesticide exposure. Workers bring pesticides into their homes in the form of residues on their tools, clothes, shoes, and skin. They inadvertently expose their children through a hug if they cannot shower after work. The close proximity of agricultural fields to residential areas results in aerial drift of pesticides into farmworkers' homes, schools, and playgrounds. Some schoolyards are directly adjacent to fields of crops that are sprayed with pesticides.

Chlorpyrifos is a neurotoxic pesticide known for its damaging effects on the human nervous system. Short-term symptoms of low-dose exposure may include headaches, agitation, inability to concentrate, weakness, tiredness, nausea, diarrhea and blurred vision. Higher doses can lead to respiratory paralysis, endocrine disruption, lung and prostate cancer, and death. Pregnant women and the developing fetus are more sensitive to chlorpyrifos toxicity. Studies have shown that exposures to even very low doses of chlorpyrifos during the nine months of pregnancy are associated with lower birth weight and adverse neurodevelopmental effects to children, including diminished cognitive ability (loss of IQ points), poorer working memory, and delays in motor development.

Additionally, neonicotinoids are currently the most widely used pesticides in the world and a recent study shows that they have an impact on human health as well. The study, published by

Environmental Health Perspectives, shows a link between neonicotinoid exposure and the development of cancer cells.

SB 853 will greatly strengthen worker protections around pesticides. We urge you to support this bill that will protect farmworkers and their families. We urge you to support this bill that will protect farmworkers and their families.

Thank you,

Association of Western Pulp and Paper Workers

Communication Workers of America, Local 7901

Portland Jobs with Justice

Northwest Forest Worker Center

Northwest Workers' Justice Project