

HB 4109
Testimony in Opposition
Helle Ruddenklau
Ruddenklau Farms

Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Baertschiger, members of the committee,

My name is Helle Ruddenklau. I'm a farmer from Amity and I'm here today to urge you to oppose House Bill 4109.

As any person who has gone through the pesticide applicators license class can tell you, the label is the law. An incredible amount of research has to be done to come up with the rates, guidelines and requirements that you will find on the product label. This is scientific work done by non-partisan career professionals. It is an established process which has worked well since its inception. When a pesticide is approved, it is after an exhaustive analysis of the efficacy of the product balanced by the risk and dangers associated with its use. Potential harm to humans and other living creatures is carefully considered and mitigated by restrictions such as restricted entry intervals, personal protective equipment required, buffers along streams etc.

Chlorpyrifos is a restricted use chemical, so you much have a pesticide applicators license in order to purchase it. That means that right now, chlorpyrifos can only be used by people who are trained in handling pesticides.

It is also important to keep as many pesticides legal as possible. A cornerstone of pesticide application is to use the right product, at the right time and at the right rate. If too many pesticides are banned, we are left with a reduced tool box and will end up using products which might not be the exact right fit for our problem. Nobody uses pesticides without considering other alternatives. Are there enough insects to reach the threshold where an application is necessary? Are there enough natural enemies present that we can hold off and see if they can take care of the problem first? Pesticides are expensive, and we only use them when we have to. Chlorpyrifos is an older pesticide and as such is slowly being phased out anyway as newer, better options become available. However, we are not yet at a point where we can completely do without it.

Banning chlorpyrifos now will have significant consequences for farmers in Oregon and put us at a competitive disadvantage. This ban comes without any consideration for what options we might have in the future. There is no funding for research for alternatives, or an assurance that there can be some exemptions for emergency situations. What if an invasive species needs to be targeted and this pesticide is the correct tool to use? Rather than banning chlorpyrifos outright I would ask you to invest money in research to come up with alternatives.