

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 18, 2017

The Honorable Pat Roberts  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture,  
Nutrition, & Forestry  
328A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC, 20510

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture,  
Nutrition, & Forestry  
328A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC, 20510

Dear Chairman Roberts and Ranking Member Stabenow:

We write to express our concern about moving forward with the Pesticide Registration Information Act (PRIA) reauthorization and facilitating The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)'s registration of pesticides without including any safeguards to ensure scientific integrity, worker protection, and EPA's compliance with its legal duty to protect the public from unreasonable harm from pesticides.

As the agency in charge of reviewing pesticides, EPA has the power to register some of the most toxic pesticides in the nation even knowing that these substances will reach our food, be washed into our water and directly contact children, farmers, farmworkers and rural communities. Unsafe pesticides can threaten the health and safety of agricultural workers when they mix and apply these chemicals, as well as when they enter fields where chemicals have been recently sprayed. They are directly consumed by children and families through produce they eat from the grocery store and can contaminate drinking water through run-off.

Since Administrator Pruitt took office, EPA has taken multiple actions in a very short time that put farmworkers, their families, rural communities -- indeed, the entire country -- at risk. Most concerning, Administrator Pruitt recently ordered that chlorpyrifos, a pesticide linked to neurodevelopmental disorders in children and acute poisonings of farm workers, can continue to be used on food, overruling the clear recommendation of EPA staff without citing any compelling contrary evidence. This decision should be reversed immediately, and we certainly cannot afford to wait five more years until October of 2022, which is the next deadline when EPA is required to re-consider this decision.

Furthermore, following requests by the agricultural industry, EPA is also proposing to delay the implementation of two rules that are vital to the protection of our nation's farmworkers: the Agricultural Worker Protection Standard (WPS) and the Certification of

Pesticide Applicators (CPA) rule. These moves are entirely inconsistent with the PRIA legislation reported by the Senate Agriculture Committee, which sets aside funds to help EPA implement these same rules that Administrator Pruitt is now seeking to delay.

Farmworkers have one of the highest rates of chemical exposures among U.S. workers. They are regularly exposed to pesticides throughout their workday in various ways, from mixing or applying pesticides to planting, weeding, harvesting or processing crops. Despite the urgent need to protect farmworkers and their families from pesticide exposure, they are afforded fewer protections than workers exposed to chemicals in other industrial sectors. While most workers look to the Department of Labor, and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to protect them from dangerous chemicals, farmworkers must rely on the EPA to protect them from pesticide exposure, and thus PRIA should adequately reflect important worker safety priorities.

- **Worker Protection Standard (WPS)**

In November 2015, after more than a decade of stakeholder meetings, study and consideration, EPA finalized revisions to the WPS that provide critical improvements designed to reduce the risk of illness or injury resulting from farmworkers' occupational exposures to pesticides. The WPS calls for basic preventive measures that include: direct and timely access to pesticide application information (the use, location, and hazards of specific pesticides); the basic right to a designated representative who can access pesticide application information on a worker's behalf; a minimum age of 18 to prohibit children from applying pesticides; protection from drifting pesticides; anti-retaliation protections; and emergency assistance.

- **Certification of Pesticide Applicators (CPA)**

In January of this year, after more than 40 years, EPA updated its regulations concerning the certification of, and training requirements for, individuals who apply restricted use pesticides (RUPs), which are some of the most dangerous pesticides available on the market and are applied in agricultural, commercial and residential settings. Misuse of RUPs has resulted in injury, illness and death and highlights the importance of adequate training and proper handling of RUPs in order to protect our families from a preventable tragedy. The CPA rule enhances applicator competency standards, establishes a minimum age of 18 for pesticide applicators of RUPs, requires adequate training and supervision of non-certified pesticide applicators, and improves the quality of information that workers receive about the pesticides that they apply.

The updated WPS and CPA rules provide long-overdue protections for farmworkers, their families and rural communities across the U.S. We all have a responsibility to make sure that the families and communities most exposed to pesticides are protected.


We recognize the importance that pesticides play in the agricultural community and beyond, but must be assured of safety first. Therefore, we believe that the reauthorization of PRIA is a critical opportunity to address scientific integrity and farmworker safety, and the full Senate should include a limited number of improvements before approving this legislation, including finalizing the EPA staff recommended ban on chlorpyrifos and ensuring that the worker protection rules are implemented in a timely manner.

Sincerely,



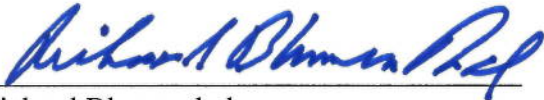
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Tom Udall  
U.S. Senator



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Benjamin L. Cardin  
U.S. Senator



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Richard Blumenthal  
U.S. Senator



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Cory A. Booker  
U.S. Senator