



July 12, 2011

To: Joint Committee on the Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture  
From: The Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation  
RE: HB 1136 - An Act for a competitive economy through safer alternatives to toxic chemicals

The Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation is the largest farming organization in the Commonwealth. On behalf of our more than 6000 members and their families, I am writing to oppose 1136 - An Act for a competitive economy through safer alternatives to toxic chemicals as it applies to pesticides. We cannot comment on this bill for chemical use outside the agricultural sector.

This bill essentially creates an infrastructure for the review of chemicals matching higher-risk chemicals with lower risk alternatives through various regulatory and technical assistance programs. Such an infrastructure has long existed in Massachusetts for pesticides and it has been very successful. The existing infrastructure consists of several components:

- MA Pesticide Board and Subcommittee – MGL 132 B establishes these two bodies to guide DAR on pesticide policy, regulation and registration. On all three fronts, the Pesticide Board (which is comprised of various representatives of both state and private interests) has been a leader in the country in progressive, effective pesticide management. Regulations relative protection of areas such as groundwater, right-of-way, lawn care and structural pest control are the most advanced in the nation and have frequently served as a model for other states.
- UMASS Integrated Pest Management Program - Funded through the state, the UMASS IPM program has long been effective both in reducing the use of pesticide by more than 70% in some areas AND making farmers, turf manager, lawncare operators and others more profitable. The program has won a number of national awards, including one related to Toxic Use Reduction.
- UMASS Extension – Through an extensive web of research and education programs, UMASS has educated farmers and other pesticide applicators both on proper use of pesticides and on proper management of pests. Pest management training focuses on an IPM approach which utilizes both chemical and non-chemical controls. UMASS Extension is also involved in research and education on organic methods of production and turf management.

It is hard to imagine the program proposed in this bill being more effective than the existing system for pesticide use. At worst, the bill would duplicate efforts. At best, it would rob resources from an already successful system. We urge the Committee to report this bill unfavorably as it relates to pesticides.

Contact

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