

Health Group Letter- 2018 Farm Bill

August 29, 2018

The Honorable Michael Conaway
Chairman
House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Collin Peterson
Ranking Member
House Committee on Agriculture
1305 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

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

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

Dear Chairman Conaway, Ranking Member Peterson, Chairman Roberts, and Ranking Member Stabenow:

As you reconcile the House and Senate Farm Bills, our organizations urge you to reject provisions that undermine the health of Americans.

The Farm Bill is an opportunity to protect the safety and security of food and to increase the health of the nation. Unfortunately, many provisions included in the House version of the 2018 Farm Bill (H.R.2 - Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018) would expose Americans to greater amounts of pesticides, toxic chemicals, and other hazards and could harm human health.

Specifically, the final bill should eliminate provisions that prevent state and local governments from acting to protect their constituents. Local governments can often act more quickly and specifically than the federal government in response to immediate threats. To adequately protect human health and respect the right of the states, the federal government should set minimum protections and allow the states to set regulations that make sense for their community. Similarly, the final bill should reject provisions that undermine federal government's ability to protect Americans from water pollution and from pesticides and other dangerous pollutants.

The provisions described below could result in more exposure to chemicals and elevate the risks that Americans face both on and off the farm.

- Local pesticide laws: Section 9101 prohibits local governments from adopting their own pesticide rules, even if new data links them to adverse health impacts. This provision would overturn decades of precedent and Supreme Court rulings, and could prevent communities from tailoring laws against harmful chemicals.
- Clean Water Act and pesticides: Section 9117 of the House bill eliminates the Clean Water Act's permit requirement for directly discharging pesticides into waterways. Proponents of this measure inaccurately state that the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) approval is sufficient to protect human health. However, FIFRA approval does not take into consideration locally specific considerations such as whether the waterbody is used for fishing and swimming or whether it is already impaired. These considerations are crucial for limiting

Health Group Letter- 2018 Farm Bill

human exposure to pesticides through waterways. The amendment would risk increased human contact with pesticides and also deprive local officials of information about what pesticides are being directly discharged into waterways.

- Pesticides and human health: Section 9119 enacts the “Pesticide Registration Improvement Act” in a form that provides long-term funding to EPA for expedited processing of pesticide approval applications, without accompanying measures to ensure that farmworkers and other pesticide applicators are safe.
- The King Provision: Sections 11701 and 11702 block any state regulation of an agricultural product produced in another state, if that regulation is more protective than the federal counterpart. Under the King provision, a state could not ban the in-state sale of produce covered in highly toxic pesticides from other states. Additionally, this provision would give producers of highly dangerous products a right to sue states that protect themselves for financial damages. The language is so sweeping and vague that it could prevent states from taking immediate action when a chemical applied to out-of-state agricultural products is found to be extremely dangerous.

These and other provisions that undermine human health have no place in a bill that is intended to nourish the nation. As you continue working towards a final Farm Bill, we once again urge you to reject these provisions and deliver a bill that protects and improves public health.

Sincerely,

Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments

American Public Health Association

Breast Cancer Prevention Partners

Health Care Without Harm

March of Dimes

Medical Advocates for Healthy Air

The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson’s Research

Physicians for Social Responsibility

Union of Concerned Scientists

CC: Farm Bill Conferees in the United States Senate

Farm Bill Conferees in the United States House of Representatives