



MOFGA Testimony In Support Of
LD 8 - An Act to Increase Support for the Modernization of the Board of Pesticides Control by Increasing the Annual Pesticide Registration Fee
January 25, 2023

Good morning Senator Ingwersen, Representative Pluecker and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. My name is Heather Spalding and I am deputy director of the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA). MOFGA is creating a food system that is healthy and fair for all of us. Through education, training and advocacy, we are helping farmers thrive, making more local, organic food available and building sustainable communities.

I am speaking today in support of *LD 8 - An Act to Increase Support for the Modernization of the Board of Pesticides Control by Increasing the Annual Pesticide Registration Fee*.

As you may know, MOFGA has been advocating for stronger regulations of pesticide use for more than 50 years. Since our beginning we have advocated for policies that reduce all farmers' and homeowners' reliance on pesticides, and all citizens' exposures to pesticides in their diets and in the air and drinking water. We believe that the dramatic increases since the 1950s in childhood and adult cancer rates, as well as immune system and reproductive abnormalities, are directly related to the toxins that increasingly contaminate our environment and threaten the very existence of the pollinators on which our food systems rely.

We are very happy about the progress made during the 130th Legislature regarding banning chlorpyrifos, restricting the use of neonicotinoid pesticides for residential landscaping purposes, reforming the composition of the Board of Pesticides Control to reduce conflict of interest, banning glyphosate and dicamba use on school grounds, and addressing concerns about PFAS in pesticides. We continue to advocate for reform in pesticide policy at the federal level. We want to keep lines of communication open and find solutions for minimizing reliance on pesticides.

MOFGA has attended and reported on the work of the BPC since the BPC started and we recognize that the staff and board members work incredibly hard to keep up with the many challenges associated with pesticide sales and use in Maine. While we have heard that the BPC's budget and cash balance through the years have often created a surplus, which, at times, provided important funding for other programs within the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, we understand that escalating costs from overhead needs, information technology contracts, and salaries are shifting the financial picture for the BPC. We hear that there is sufficient funding for this year and next, but that in 2025 there will be a serious need for increased funding to ensure that the cash balance doesn't fall short.

Pesticide registration fees in other states generally are much higher than Maine's. A quick sampling of annual fees in other states indicates that \$500 or \$600 per pesticide product is not unusual.

At the recent emergency meeting of the BPC, we learned that the revenue being generated by registration of adjuvants will not contribute significantly to the BPC's operations. BPC Director Megan Patterson reported that there are only about 65 adjuvants registered to date, which surprised us. We had anticipated a much greater number of registrations as adjuvants are common in pesticide products.

The BPC's purpose is to help Maine minimize its reliance on pesticides and there is a bit of a paradox in that its funding and potential for growth is directly linked to the number of pesticides it registers. Increasing the per product fee is one way to ensure that the BPC has the funds it needs while still having the authority to eliminate the most harmful pesticides from the market.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this bill. I would be happy to answer questions.

The Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA) started in 1971 and is the oldest and largest state organic organization in the country. We're a broad-based community that educates about and advocates for organic agriculture, illuminating its interdependence with a healthy environment, local food production, and thriving communities. We have 15,000 members, we certify more than 500 organic farms and processing facilities representing \$90 million in sales, and we are working hard to provide training and create opportunities for Maine's next generation of farmers. Each of these farmers is a Maine businessperson for whom economic health and environmental health are interdependent. While MOFGA envisions a future of healthy ecosystems, communities, people and economies sustained by the practices of organic agriculture, we attribute our success to collaboration and outreach to growers across the management spectrum.