




OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE  
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20850

Isiah Leggett  
*County Executive*

MEMORANDUM

October 19, 2015

TO: George Leventhal, Council President

FROM: Isiah Leggett, County Executive 

RE: Bill 52-14, Pesticides – Notice - Requirements

I have received Bill 52-14 from the Council. I am returning the Bill without my signature for the reasons explained below.

A number of individuals and groups have been involved in the debate over Bill 52-14, and I believe they all share the goal of protecting public health and the environment. The challenge has always been figuring out the best way to achieve this goal related to regulating the use of pesticides.

No one would disagree that the issue is incredibly complex. There are differing opinions on the state of the science and risk associated with pesticide use, society's perception and values on what constitutes a healthy lawn, and the availability and viability of organic only alternatives.

Most importantly, there are differing views on the role local government should play in regulating pesticides.

I am concerned about the opinions of an Assistant Attorney General regarding whether a ban on the use of certain pesticides in the County would be preempted by state law. Undoubtedly, this measure will be taken to court, and the result there is quite uncertain.

I support limited bans on child care centers, playgrounds, and other areas where the potential effects on children may be greater, but believe additional outreach and education on alternatives to non-essential pesticides are needed. An outright ban on the use of certain pesticides will be confusing to residents and businesses in the County, and will make enforcement of the law challenging, particularly given that these pesticides have been approved for use by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the State of Maryland.

I remain opposed to setting a prescribed date for a ban of non-essential pesticides on playing and recreational fields, particularly the County's higher-quality, competitive-level playing fields. The amended legislation sets out an expectation that playing fields will be

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pesticide free by 2020 with submittal of a plan of action by 2019. My understanding is that turf experts have expressed concerns that, because of factors unique to our Mid-Atlantic climate, pesticides are required to ensure quality playing surfaces and to minimize player injury resulting from uneven surfaces.

It is my view that the schedule and scope of plans to create pesticide-free playing fields should be informed by the pilot projects Parks is undertaking, as well as the current state of the organic lawn care technology and feasibility, rather than an arbitrary deadline. That is common sense. Why would we pre-judge the pilot project before it even begins?

Again, I appreciate the due diligence the Council has given to this issue. However, I am returning the measure, and will allow it to go into effect without my signature.