

Vote Yes on HB24-1178 Reduce the Risks Associated with Pesticide Exposures

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Why this bill is important:

HB24-1178 would allow local communities the option to establish practices that are *more protective* than existing and baseline state requirements. Safer-use practices are essential to minimizing the risks of pesticide overexposure to human health, pollinators, and local ecosystems.

The risks to human health:

Pesticides are toxic to living things and have known adverse effects on multiple systems of the human body, including the nervous, reproductive, and endocrine systems. Exposure to pesticides can cause both short-term and long-term health effects, with children among the most vulnerable, along with immune-compromised individuals and those who are regularly exposed where they work or live. A significant body of public health research [demonstrates a link](#)¹ between exposure to commonly found pesticides and adverse consequences for children's health. There is also [research](#)² indicating that children of Black, indigenous, and people of color are at higher risk for pesticide-induced illnesses due to increased exposure.

The risks to pollinators:

Pesticides harm pollinators by disrupting pollination and compounding the effects of stressors on pollinator populations (i.e., habitat loss, pathogens, and climate change). Yet, pollinators are responsible for providing about 35% of our food. According to a recent [Harvard School of Public Health study](#),³ the decrease in pollinator populations on a global scale has reduced the supply of healthy foods, which in turn is associated with heart disease, stroke, diabetes and certain cancers. Moreover, pollinators sustain plant communities that provide food and shelter for wildlife. In short, plant pollination is essential to human health, global food webs, and the protection of biodiversity.

The risks to ecosystems:

The overuse and misuse of pesticides can be toxic to birds, fish, beneficial insects, and non-target plants. Further, contamination of water by pesticides [is widespread](#),⁴ and has been attributed to declines in aquatic insect life. Many of Colorado's unique and diverse ecosystems, including our waterways, are crucial to the health of our economy, not to mention the well-being of humans and biodiversity. The widespread application of pesticides not only poisons our surface and groundwater, it diminishes floral diversity and depletes beneficial soil microorganisms, which are essential for the healthy function of our ecosystems.

Addressing misconceptions:

It is important to note that local authority allowed by HB24-1178 is limited. The bill exempts agriculture, marijuana cultivation, public utility infrastructure, etc. Actions taken by communities must be consistent with federal and state law and not in conflict with Colorado's bed bug law and warranty of habitability law as it relates to structural pests. A bill amendment adopted by the House Energy and Environment Committee addressed many of the industry's concerns. The largest pest control company in the state, Rentokil/Terminix, even changed its stance on the bill from 'opposed' to 'neutral.' However, many members of the industry remain opposed.

Addressing Misconceptions:

MISCONCEPTION: “The bill poses an undue hardship to industry because it allows localities to establish safer-use practices more stringent than those required by state law.”

FACT: The ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach in existing state law does not adequately protect the health of communities and their most cherished natural resources. In fact, it prevents local officials from addressing health and environmental risks resulting from pesticide overexposure. Empowering localities to establish safety practices concerning pesticides [mirrors laws for other health-related industries](#)⁵ pertaining to food safety, tobacco, alcohol, and firearms, emergency preparedness, maternal and child health, and chronic disease prevention. Similarly, local governments can establish local codes for various occupations, such as builders, plumbers and electricians, without undue hardship. There is no evidence to suggest that safer-use requirements for pesticide applicators would be any different. A forthcoming amendment directs The Department of Agriculture to develop a publicly available map to show local ordinances at any particular location in the state, making it simple to follow place-based rules.

MISCONCEPTION: “Areas adjacent to localities with safer-use pesticide requirements may get more noxious weeds and pests.”

FACT: There is no evidence to suggest that efforts to minimize pesticide use would lead to an increase in noxious weeds or pests. Conversely, such practices would support healthier soils and beneficial insects, in turn benefitting surrounding lands by establishing more resilient ecosystems. Examples of safer-use pesticide practices include: notifications for spraying around schools and other sensitive sites, using beneficial insects to counteract pests, and planting native plants to minimize the need for pesticides. Actions taken by communities must be consistent with federal and state law and not in conflict with the Noxious Weed law, Colorado’s bed bug law and warranty of habitability law as it relates to structural pests.

MISCONCEPTION: “The bill would usurp the state’s existing and sufficient authority over pesticides.”

FACT: The bill does not change the state’s existing authority over pesticides. Instead, it allows local governments to be good stewards of their economies and ecosystems through scientifically sound policy to adequately protect vulnerable populations and natural resources. The deficiencies of federal oversight regarding pesticides are [well-documented](#)⁶. For example, much of the science driving federal and state regulation is based on industry-funded research. In addition, these studies do not address the so-called “inert” substances, which may be more toxic than the “active” ingredient. In fact, “inert” ingredients are often not listed on a label because they are proprietary. Further, pesticides are routinely mixed before application, and the toxicity of these combinations is untested.

MISCONCEPTION: “The bill restricts the use of pesticides to exterminate vermin, such as bed bugs and those in homes, schools, and hospitals.”

FACT: The bill does not allow local officials to regulate pesticides in ways that conflict with federal or state laws regarding the extermination of vermin, including bedbugs. Federal and state standards would remain intact.

MISCONCEPTION: “Local elected officials lack the expertise to regulate pesticides.”

FACT: This bill requires local policy to be guided by peer-reviewed science, so any protective measures must be evidence-based. Local officials are uniquely positioned to best address risks of pesticide overexposure due to local knowledge of geography, ecology and demography specific to their jurisdictions regarding:

Human overexposure: Pesticides are applied in parks, athletic fields, and around schools, hospitals, and childcare centers. Safer-use practices could consider ways to reduce overexposure to pesticides through education or protective measures.

Ecosystems: Pesticide application should consider the local ecology. For example, it is appropriate for a locality with extensive waterways to prevent contamination by adopting more protective measures than a community where waterways are scarce. Since Colorado is one of the most geographically diverse states in the country, it makes sense for local officials to respond to the specific needs of their communities.

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3. Smith, M. R., Mueller, N. D., Springmann, M., Sulser, T. B., Garibaldi, L. A., Gerber, J., Wiebe, K., & Myers, S. S. (2022). Pollinator deficits, food consumption, and consequences for human health: A modeling study. *Environmental Health Perspectives*, 130(12). <https://doi.org/10.1289/ehp.10947>
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5. Briggs, E. (2017). Local Health Departments Impact Our Lives Every Day. NACCHO downloadable resources. <https://www.naccho.org/uploads/downloadable-resources/transition-appendix-A-Infographic.pdf>
6. Lerner, S. (2021, June 30). The department of yes: how pesticide companies corrupted the epa and poisoned america. The Independent. Retrieved March 28, 2024, from <https://theintercept.com/2021/06/30/epa-pesticides-exposure-opp/>

Supportive organizations of HB24-1178:

350 Colorado – American Bird Conservancy – Beyond Pesticides – Boulder County – Citizens Alliance for a Sustainable Englewood – Colorado Collective for Nature-Based Early Education – Center for Biological Diversity – Colorado Municipal League – Colorado Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics – Colorado Field Ornithologists – Colorado Native Plant Society – Conservation Colorado – Colorado State Beekeepers Association – DS Environmental Consulting – Eagle River Watershed Council – EcoCycle – Frontline Farming – Green Latinos – Healthy Air and Water Colorado Action – Inland Ocean Coalition – Longmont Area Democrats – Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility – People and Pollinators Action Network – Rocky Mountain Wild – Sierra Club Colorado – South Platte Renew – Sunday – Town of Vail – Trout Unlimited – WILD Foundation