August 29, 2018

The Honorable Michael Conaway  The Honorable Collin Peterson  
Chairman  Ranking Member  
House Committee on Agriculture  House Committee on Agriculture  
1301 Longworth House Office Building  1305 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515  Washington, DC 20515  

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