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Californianos para la Reforma de los Pesticidas

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PESTICIDE ACTION & AGROECOLOGY NETWORK

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For a safer, healthier future.

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Friends Committee on Legislation of California

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A PROJECT OF THE CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

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California Environmental Justice Coalition
CEJC

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Advocates For Justice

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not Climate Change
an ecosocialist coalition

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LIFT
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PSR LA
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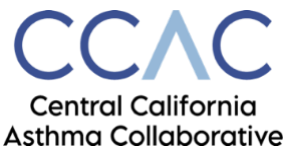
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Re: AB 1603 (Schultz) Request for Signature

Dear Governor Newsom:

On behalf of our hundreds of thousands of members and supporters, the undersigned organizations write today to urge you to sign into law AB 1603 (Schultz), a bill that, as amended August 19, 2026, would:

- Recognize PFAS pesticides by using the definition of PFAS that is consistent with the international scientific consensus, and is in line with other California statutes, the California Department of Toxic Substances Control's, the Biomonitoring California's, and the majority of other states' definitions.

- Require the California Department of Pesticide Regulation to indicate, in the Pesticide Use Reporting database, that a pesticide contains PFAS pesticide ingredients.

- Require the California Department of Pesticide Regulation to include, in its Pesticide Use Reports and other relevant pesticide use reporting documents, PFAS as a category of interest and any associated PFAS pesticide use trends.

Background and Context

An Environmental Working Group (EWG) analysis revealed that 15 million pounds of PFAS pesticides were applied to California farmland over a six-year period (2018–2023), averaging 2.5 million pounds annually. Further, 37% of non-organic California-grown produce contained PFAS pesticide residues, according to a recent Environmental Working Group analysis of DPR residue data. Since California grows over half of the nation's produce, these findings suggest that Californians and families across the United States are regularly exposed to PFAS pesticides in their food.

These findings also raise serious concerns around environmental and health-related harms associated with such broad PFAS pesticide applications. Despite these risks, California's current regulatory infrastructure does not accurately identify, characterize or regulate PFAS pesticides and is not equipped to address the magnitude of potential widespread PFAS contamination of water and soil. Already, state monitoring indicates that PFAS pesticides are frequently detected in surface waters, sediment and wastewater influent and effluent.

PFAS Harms to the Environment

Perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS, are a class of fluorinated molecules containing at least one fully fluorinated carbon atom. PFAS are highly persistent and move easily in the environment, and take a very long time to break down, if at all. As a result, they are called "forever chemicals." Their environmental and human impacts can span decades to centuries, as they contaminate ground and surface water, soil, vegetation, and wildlife.
A recent EWG report found that PFAS pesticides, in fact, were detected in half of California surface water and sediment tests. And these state tests didn't fully evaluate the problem: only a few PFAS pesticides were monitored, and no tests were done in Fresno or Kern counties, where PFAS pesticides are most heavily used.

PFAS can also accumulate in and harm wildlife and livestock, with research showing PFAS chemicals are linked to tumors in animals and lower reproductive rates in birds. PFAS have been detected in marine mammals and birds in the

San Francisco Bay and freshwater fish. One study of US Environmental Protection Agency data found very high concentrations of PFAS in freshwater fish caught in rivers and streams throughout the United States, including in California. According to this report, eating one serving of freshwater fish can be the equivalent to drinking very high levels of PFAS-contaminated water for a month.

PFAS Harms to Human Health

PFAS chemicals are linked to a litany of adverse health effects, including elevated risks of cancer, high cholesterol, immune dysfunction, developmental delays, and reproductive harm. According to the US EPA, food ingestion is a major human exposure route. Given that 37% of California-grown non-organic produce is tainted with PFAS pesticides, PFAS pesticides are a significant source of our food-derived exposure. In agricultural waterways, where these 'forever chemicals' bioaccumulate through the food chain and contaminate fish, PFAS create significant health risks for fish consumers. Further, the release of PFAS pesticides into the environment may contribute to the PFAS detected in drinking water systems serving 25.4 million Californians. Millions of Californians are cumulatively exposed to PFAS chemicals, warranting expedited, often rate payer-funded measures to decrease PFAS-related exposures.

An emerging concern is that PFAS pesticides transform into ultra-short chain PFAS, such as trifluoroacetic acid (TFA), which is a PFAS that degrades from other PFAS and is contaminating drinking water sources. TFA is found at high rates in human blood, and is increasingly associated with reproductive toxicity and immunotoxicity. Most recently, the Risk Assessment Committee of the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) has recommended listing TFA as toxic to reproduction (Category 1B), concluding it "may damage the unborn child" and is "suspected of damaging fertility." Most PFAS pesticides transform into TFA, which has been found in many California drinking water sources.

Farmworker and Farm Working Communities

Counties with the highest PFAS application rates also have high percentages of Latino farmworker populations, who are on the frontlines of PFAS pollution and live or work near fields that regularly apply PFAS pesticides. This is truly concerning, as these populations are already disproportionately exposed to toxic pesticides as well as other PFAS exposure routes, such as in-field crop residues and pesticide handling.

California law defines environmental justice to include the availability of a healthy environment for all people and the deterrence, reduction, and elimination of pollution burdens so that they are not disproportionately borne by affected populations and communities. Signing AB 1603 would advance this

statutory commitment by identifying and tracking a preventable source of PFAS exposure for farmworker communities.

State of PFAS Pesticides Regulation

California utilizes 53 of the 70 PFAS pesticides approved by the United States Environmental Protection Agency. This accounts to about 2.5 million pounds out of 175 million pounds applied in the state in 2023. Yet, no additional oversight or scrutiny has been added to this class of pesticides. DPR has not identified these pesticides as containing PFAS compounds and does not inform growers and other pesticide users that the pesticide products they are applying to their land and crops contain PFAS.

Also, the evaluation of toxicity assessments for PFAS pesticides does not give special attention to the PFAS that PFAS pesticides transform into, such as the above-mentioned TFA. Moreover, DPR does not adequately assess cumulative impacts of pesticides, and so does not fully consider the potential health effects of the many PFAS pesticides used on produce.

Finally, due to DPR's mismanagement of PFAS pesticides, local governments and public water systems are not aware that PFAS pesticides are being spread throughout their jurisdictions.

CA Provides Half the Nation's Produce Supply, But Fails to Stop PFAS Pesticide Use

The widespread presence of PFAS pesticides on California-grown produce underscores a concerning and largely unaddressed gap in pesticide oversight and PFAS use reductions. The California Legislature has recognized the need to drastically curb the use of PFAS by enacting numerous laws prohibiting PFAS in various consumer products, food packaging and firefighting foam. However, widespread use of PFAS pesticides—which contaminate our food—has gone unfettered.

Assembly Bill 1603 calls for greater transparency around PFAS pesticide usage in California and will set the stage for better oversight of the use of these forever pesticides.

AB 1603 Definition of PFAS – Based on California's Established Definition

The bill would also establish a class-based definition of PFAS pesticides, consistent with **other California laws** and **regulations** already **addressing these chemicals**. That definition matters: It ensures tracking and disclosure requirements can't be sidestepped with chemical-by-chemical loopholes.

The definition would also lay the groundwork for action that avoids **"regrettable substitutions"** – PFAS replacements that can also have health concerns.

Here is a compilation of the many statutes and regulatory actions that have employed AB 1603's definition of PFAS:

Legislation:

● AB 1200 (2021): Banned PFAS in plant fiber-based food packaging and required labeling for cookware containing chemicals of concern (Health & Safety Code §109000(a)(2))

● AB 652 (2021): Prohibited regulated PFAS in juvenile products (such as crib mattresses and foam nap mats) (Health & Safety Code §108945(e))

● AB 1817 (2022): Prohibited intentionally added PFAS and set total organic fluorine thresholds in textile articles (Health & Safety Code §108970(e))

● AB 2771 (2022): Banned intentionally added PFAS in cosmetic products (Health & Safety Code §108982(b))

● SB 1044 (2020): Banned PFAS in certain firefighter personal protective equipment and Class B firefighting foam (Health & Safety Code §§ 13029(a)(3),13061(a)(5))

● AB 2515 (2024): Prohibited intentionally added PFAS in menstrual products (Health & Safety Code § 25258(c))

Regulation:

- The California Environmental Contaminant Biomonitoring Program adopted the "one fully fluorinated carbon" definition, such as that used in AB 1603, to regulate the entire class at once under that program.

- The Department of Toxic Substances Control adopted "Carpets and Rugs with Perfluoroalkyl or Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFASs)" and "Treatments Containing PFASs for Use on Converted Textiles or Leathers" as priority products for PFAS effective July 1, 2021, and April 1, 2022, respectively.

    - According to DTSC, a priority product is a "consumer product that (1) contains one or more Candidate Chemicals that have the potential to harm people or the environment, and (2) has been formally listed in the California Code of Regulations through rulemaking."

    - In the finalized regulatory text for both priority products, DTSC defined PFAS as "a class of fluorinated organic chemicals

containing at least one fully fluorinated carbon atom, as defined by the California Environmental Contaminant Biomonitoring Program.

- IN PROGRESS – The DTSC officially released a draft Product-Chemical Profile to list floor cleaners, waxes, and polishes containing PFAS as a Priority Product.

    - The documentation explicitly states that PFAS encompass the broad class of chemicals containing at least one fully fluorinated carbon atom.

We strongly believe this bill—with newly required transparency—remains critically important to protecting Californians' health and environment.

The bill's fiscal impacts should be minimal, since the bill does not require a new program and simply incorporates the new reporting requirement into existing reporting processes.

We respectfully urge you to sign AB 1603 into law.

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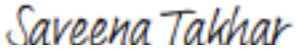

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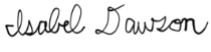

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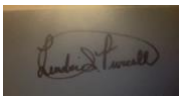

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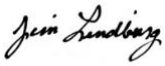

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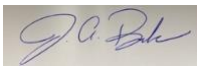

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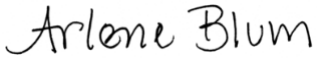

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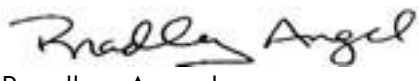

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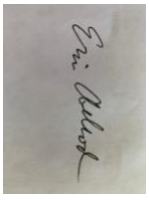

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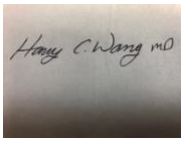

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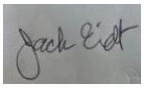

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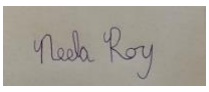

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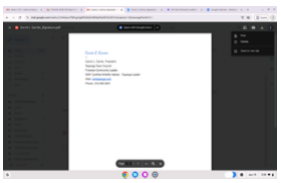

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