



Public Testimony on Bill 200425 titled “Healthy Outdoor Public Spaces” to Philadelphia Health
and Human Services Committee
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Dear Committee members,

Thank you to Chairperson Bass for the opportunity to provide written public testimony in support of Bill number 200425, title “Healthy Outdoor Public Spaces”. I am the Philadelphia campaign manager for PennFuture. As a statewide environmental advocacy organization, our team is working daily to protect public health, restore and protect natural resources, and move Pennsylvania toward a clean energy future. In Philadelphia we are working to improve water quality in the Delaware River Basin and increase community, political, and public support for distributed, green infrastructure in Philadelphia.

The Delaware River Basin provides drinking water to an estimated 13.3 million people, including two of the five largest metropolitan centers in the country: New York City and Philadelphia. One hundred percent of Philadelphia’s drinking water is drawn from the Delaware River Basin.¹ The Delaware River is the longest un-dammed river in the United States east of the Mississippi and is fed by more than 2,000 tributaries from the four basin states – New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware. Philadelphia’s rivers, creeks, and streams all flow into the Delaware River from the Wissahickon to the Cobbs Creek and the Schuylkill River.

Herbicides pose a risk to our public drinking water supply and the health of our watersheds. Two toxic herbicides, 2-4, D and Atrazine, have been detected by the independent watchdog group, Environmental Working Group to be in the Philadelphia public drinking water supply.² Even if detected in trace amounts, when being drunk by millions every day, these chemicals can accumulate in our bodies and unpredictably react with other chemicals. Toxic herbicide use has exploded in the last 15 years, and now are present almost everywhere in our environment, including rivers, and even precipitation. The United States Geological Survey has reported that Glyphosate was detected in more than 50 percent of soil and sediment samples, and water samples from ditches and drains, precipitation, large rivers, and streams across the country.³

¹ Delaware River Basin Commission, Aug. 31, 2020. “Basin Information.” <https://www.state.nj.us/drbc/basin/> accessed Oct. 5, 2020.

² Environmental Working Group, 2020. “EWG’s Tap Water Database – 2019 Update. Philadelphia Water Department”. <https://www.ewg.org/tapwater/system.php?pws=PA1510001> . accessed Oct. 5, 2020.

³ U.S. Geological Survey, June 27, 2018. “Common weed killer is widespread in the environment.” https://toxics.usgs.gov/highlights/2014-04-23-glyphosate_2014.html. Accessed Oct. 5, 2020.



There are two primary ways that Philadelphia is contributing to the herbicide pollution in our drinking water. When it rains, or when snow melts, herbicides enter the Basin through non-point source pollution runoff. Nonpoint source pollution means they do not come from a single polluter, like a chemical company or wastewater treatment plant. Instead, they come from lots of sources – including many of us. The Clean Water Act does not address non-point source pollutants, so it is up to us to address the problem. The other way herbicides enter the Basin is through Philadelphia’s network of combined sewers that combine stormwater and wastewater during rain events and route it directly into the surrounding rivers, creeks, and streams.

A shift to organic land management seems scary and unattainable, but many also thought that this about the city’s huge shift from gray infrastructure to green infrastructure through the *Green City, Clean Waters* program. The traditional approach to stormwater management, gray infrastructure, would have cost \$8-10 billion dollars to address our stormwater pollution and would have relied on bringing in jobs from outside the city to modernize our infrastructure system. The traditional approach did not include any of the community benefits of green infrastructure – local jobs, addressing the urban heat island effect, creating more green space, and improving public health and safety. And failing to address the problem would have continued to impact the health of our residents and our waterways. Philadelphia envisioned stormwater management in a fundamentally different way. Today, *Green City, Clean Waters* is one of the most successful programs in the history of the city, greening our city, absorbing and filtering our stormwater, cleaning our air, making our neighborhoods healthier and safer, and providing green jobs. Organic land management, without the use of toxic herbicides, presents the same opportunities, and builds on Philadelphia’s commitment to healthy and accessible greenspaces.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide written public testimony. PennFuture is in strong support for passage of Bill 200425, Healthy Outdoor Spaces.