FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Erin Fitzgerald, (516) 312-1423, erincrpe@gmail.com
Nayamin Martinez, MPH (559) 907-2047, nayamin.martinez@ccejn.org

Environmental Justice Organizations Urge State Legislators to Ban Chlorpyrifos

Newly introduced bill would ban pesticide linked to serious public health risks

Sacramento, CA | March 5, 2019 -- Last week, a bill was introduced by State Senator Maria Elena Durazo into the California State Legislature that would prohibit the use of chlorpyrifos (pronounced klor-PURE-a-foss) throughout the state. The Center on Race, Poverty, & the Environment (CRPE), along with Central California Environmental Justice Network (CCEJN), urge Californians and state legislators to support the passage of this bill, titled “Protect Children from Brain-Damaging Chlorpyrifos” or SB 458. Chlorpyrifos, developed initially as a World War II era nerve gas, is a pesticide that is primarily sprayed on citrus trees and poses several serious public health risks.

Chlorpyrifos is a neurotoxin that attacks the central nervous system. Exposure to the pesticide can happen either through direct contact with the chemical residue or by “drift,” when the chemical travels through the air after being sprayed. A growing body of published scientific research links exposure to chlorpyrifos with long-term harmful human health effects, including neuro-developmental disorders, hyperactivity, attention deficit disorder, low birth weights, and reduced newborn head circumference, which is indicative of impaired cognitive ability. People who are pregnant and children are the most at-risk for harm by being exposed to the pesticide. Other states are also considering bills that would ban chlorpyrifos.

Executive Director of CRPE Caroline Farrell urges, “California needs to protect kids health rather than the profits of Dow Chemical by banning chlorpyrifos. Several government sponsored scientific review panels have confirmed the harmful health impacts of chlorpyrifos. The US EPA ignored the recommendation of its own Scientific Review Panel by allowing chlorpyrifos to remain in use. California can and must do better. California frequently holds itself out as an environmental leader. It is time for California to act.”

In 2016, over 900,000 pounds of chlorpyrifos were applied in the state of California, more than half of that was applied in Kern, Tulare, and Fresno counties. Chlorpyrifos has a disproportionate effect on communities of color who live, work, and go to school in direct proximity to where this poisonous pesticide is applied.

“CCEJN applauds the introduction of SB 458 because it will protect children from brain-damaging chlorpyrifos. As an organization that has worked for almost two decades to advance Environmental Justice in disadvantaged communities in the San Joaquin Valley, we understand the relevance of this bill for children in Kern, Tulare and Fresno counties, as these three counties are the top users of chlorpyrifos,” said Director Nayamin Martinez. “This practice must stop, because the science suggests babies’ brains are being damaged by each day of continued chlorpyrifos use.”

The Center on Race, Poverty, & the Environment (CRPE) is an environmental justice organization providing legal, organizing, and technical assistance to grassroots groups in low-income communities and communities of color. Our mission is to achieve environmental justice and healthy, sustainable communities through collective action and the law.

The Central California Environmental Justice Network (CCEJN) supports grassroots leaderships to promote environmental health education, community organizing, collaborative dialogue, and political involvement among rural, underserved communities of color in the San Joaquin Valley.