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FOR THE ENVIRONMENT



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**TESTIMONY TO THE CGA ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE ON
MERCURY THERMOSTAT COLLECTION AND RECYCLING (SB 93)
AND
AUTHORIZING MUNICIPAL REGULATION OF PESTICIDE USE (HB 5121)**

Louis W. Burch, CT Program Coordinator
Citizens Campaign for the Environment
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Senator Meyer, Representative Roy, distinguished members of the Environment Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Louis Burch, program coordinator for Citizens Campaign for the Environment (CCE). CCE is an 80,000 member non-profit, non-partisan advocacy organization that works to protect public health and the natural environment. CCE is testifying today in support of SB 93 and HB 5121.

SB 93

CCE is supportive of incentives for the collection and safe disposal of mercury thermostats. Mercury is a bioaccumulative and persistent toxic heavy metal which causes significant adverse health effects, including: reproductive, behavioral, developmental, neurological, and physiological impairments in fish, wildlife, and humans.

Connecticut has prohibited the sale of mercury thermostats, but there are still an estimated 1.7 million of these thermostats currently in use in homes and businesses throughout the state. The Connecticut General Assembly should continue its efforts to safeguard the public from exposure to mercury by passing SB 93, which creates a strong incentive for consumers to recycle their old thermostats, by including a \$5 bounty for proper disposal. The legislation also makes thermostat recycling more accessible to the public and provides a much needed educational component.

The states of Vermont and Maine have passed similar laws, which have proven extremely successful... The Vermont incentive produced a 45% increase in thermostat recycling in the first two years of the program, while collection rates have more than tripled in Maine since they introduced their bounty in 2007. CCE strongly supports an incentive program for the safe disposal of mercury thermostats, which increases producer responsibility and keeps mercury out of Connecticut's air and water resources.

HB 5121

CCE strongly supports the Environment Committee in its efforts to overturn Connecticut's pesticide preemption law this year. The State of Connecticut has established itself as a leader in protecting public health by passing strong, environmentally conscious initiatives, including the ban on aesthetic pesticides in K-8 schools. However, the State still prohibits local municipalities from taking additional steps to protect their communities from the toxic effects of pesticide exposure. The preemption law is contradictory to the State's continued efforts to protect our environment and human health and must be undone.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, National Academy of Sciences, and American Public Health Association, among others, recognize the danger that pesticide exposure poses to humans. The growing body of peer reviewed scientific evidence indicates that pesticide exposure can adversely affect the neurological, respiratory, immune, and endocrine systems, even at low levels. Long-term exposure to pesticides has also been linked to cancer, including non-Hodgkin lymphoma. Municipalities have a responsibility to protect their residents from these dangers, and must be granted the right to pass stricter laws on this issue than those the state currently allows.

HB 5121 would also serve to strengthen the State's existing ban on pesticide use on K-8 playing fields by allowing groundskeepers to use microbial and biochemical pesticides as part of their daily turf care regiment. Biochemical agents such as milky spore and pheromone traps are safe, natural approaches to dealing with grubs and other insects, which can overtime deteriorate grass fields and make them unsuitable for use in sports and other recreational activities. The inability of certain school districts to deal with these pests in a safe, natural way has led a number of districts to push for the abolishment of these important children's health protections. Passage of HB 5121 would give school groundskeepers a more expansive arsenal with which to care for school green spaces and playing fields in a safe, non-toxic way, while solidifying Connecticut's commitment to protecting children's health from the deleterious effects of exposure to chemical pesticides.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today and CCE looks forward to working with you on this important issue.

Respectfully submitted,

Louis W. Burch
Program Coordinator