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Martin Mador, Legislative Chair*

Planning and Development Committee
February 22, 2012

Testimony in Strong Opposition to
HB 5155 AA Modifying The Ban On Pesticide Applications On School Grounds

Testimony Commenting on
HB 5154 AAC Regional Councils Of Elected Officials
HB 5156 AA Requiring A Study Of The Ways In Which Municipalities
May Provide Property Tax Relief

I am Martin Mador, 130 Highland Ave., Hamden, CT 06518. I am the volunteer Legislative Chair for the Sierra Club-Connecticut Chapter. I am also a director of Rivers Alliance and of the Quinnipiac River Watershed Association. I hold a Masters of Environmental Management degree from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies.

HB 5155

When considering this bill, there are two primary important ideas to keep in mind:

- (1) pesticides are toxic substances created specifically for the purpose of killing living things
- (2) growing children are most susceptible to the deleterious effects of toxic substances

In 1999, we passed a law regarding application of pesticides in schools (PA 99-165).
In 2005, we amended the law to prohibit application of lawn care pesticides on grounds of preschool and elementary schools (PA 05-252).

In 2007, we extended the ban to K-8 schools, and moved the start date of the prohibitions until 2009 to give the applicators more time to convert (PA 07-168).

In 2009, we extended the start date by one year, until 2010 (PA 09-56).

You will hear testimony about the short-term and long-term health effects of pesticides.

You will hear testimony about success stories: schools and towns who treat their grassy areas with non-toxic (organic) methods. Once the lawn has been weaned from its toxic burden, it does very well with non-toxic methods.

You will hear testimony that our knowledge of non-toxic methods has evolved so that there is no longer a financial penalty for switching to them.

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) may possibly somewhere offer an appropriate prescription for addressing the problem. However, to give applicators free license to do their work in schools, without supervision or oversight, pretending that saying "we're using IPM" will successfully protect us, is simply not sound, protective public policy. Have no doubt: IPM specifically allows the use of pesticides. There is no "reasonable" middle ground when we are talking about protecting the health of our children.

So it seems that moving from our old, obsolete, toxic, methods to newer ones which will not sicken our children is simply yet another instance of the pressing need to move beyond our unofficial state motto

The Land of Steady Habits

We imposed a ban on application of toxics in areas where our children spend their lives. What possible motive could we have to want to go backwards? This bill is all about rollbacks. The Sierra Club finds nothing of value here.

The past 40 years of environmental progress has taken us from a world filling up with pollution and toxic substances to a commitment to a cleaner and safer one. For the sake of our children, let's continue moving in that direction.

HB 5156

The bill, whose title refers to tax relief, actually concerns municipal budgets. It directs PRI to study ways of reducing municipal costs, which are paid for through property taxes.

The bill specifically mentions regionalism. The Sierra Club is concerned about government in Connecticut, where atomization of local government and the need to maximize the town's grand list drives us to make environmentally destructive land use decisions. I co-authored a white paper on the subject, *Regions as Partners*, Dec. 2010.

We applaud efforts of this committee to promote regionalism, and the inclusion of the concept in this bill.

HB 5154

Similarly, HB 5154 brings attention to regionalism by requiring the two Regional Councils of Elected Officials in the state to study it. It is Sierra's position that we need to transition the RCEOs and Regional Planning Agencies (RPA) to Regional Council of Governments (COGs) so that we can have a uniform set of regional organizations, and use them as the basis for expanding regional services and governance throughout the state.