

Testimony in support of HB 5155 – P&D Committee – February 22, 2012

Senator Cassano, Representative Gentile and members of the Planning and Development Committee, my name is Phil Grande. I reside in Orange and operate several family owned LLCs from my facility in West Haven. My wholesale garden center and my landscaping company are both DEEP registered companies. In addition, the supply yard operates a DEEP registered recycling facility for organic yard waste. I represent the greenest of green jobs. It is fair to say that the regulations you are considering will positively affect my community as well as the many jobs that I provide.

I am here to urge your support of HB5155 in order to help provide a rational, reasonable and legal approach to pesticide use at our schools and other municipal facilities. As the parent of two daughters age 11 and 13, and a former board of education member I want to see our green areas maintained in a safe and responsible manner. I know that the IPM approach to pest management works.

A few short years ago when the ban was passed the Environment Committee urged compromise between some of the groups who were in opposing positions. The solution which resulted was one sided and provided no respect or consideration for the existing state laws or the DEEP department charged with regulating our operations. Extensive university research and strategic DEEP implementation helped get us to a point where IPM became an adopted process for the state. In lawn care, we already use organic lawn care methods as part of our balanced approach to maintenance. Some of our other more traditional means of maintenance practices which might include limited pesticide use have been outlawed. IPM will allow us to achieve a balance between the two methods.

The practical reality is that the existing ban has put some of our local fields out of play. In economically distressed communities, like Ansonia or West Haven, fields are not safe enough for regular use. These towns don't have the budget flexibility of hundreds of thousands of dollars in order to completely renovate or replace them. As a former board of education member, I know that it will be difficult for school districts to bond for fields that will not be able to be maintained properly because of current laws. The citizens are not in a position to absorb the added expenses which would be incurred. Further, when the municipalities or the youth leagues wants someone like me to improve conditions or remove hazardous weeds like poison ivy on a school fence line, we are hamstrung. There is nothing that can be done by a licensed professional or town worker.

Your support of HB 5155 will help to ensure that my children and others will continue to have safely managed, healthy landscapes to play in and enjoy. The true compromise position we wanted to achieve a few short years ago can be made a reality now. Industry, municipalities, youth groups and environmental groups will be able to move forward together behind your support of HB 5155.

I appreciate your time and consideration and would be eager to answer any questions you may have concerning the issues I have outlined here.

Cordially,

Phil Grande

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