

Testimony of Patricia J. Wood
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Before the Education Committee
February 15, 2013

Grassroots Environmental Education ("Grassroots") is a non-profit, science-based organization with offices in New York and Connecticut. We seek to educate and inform decision makers about the links between common environmental toxins and human health.

Grassroots supports the adoption of HB 6385 "An Act Prohibiting the Use of Pesticides at Public Schools."

The science linking exposure to toxins, including pesticides, with serious health outcomes, especially for children, mandates that lawmakers use every opportunity to help reduce those exposures. Asthma, in particular, has become an epidemic among American school children, and pesticides used in and around schools have been directly implicated in this alarming trend. Exposure to pesticides has also been linked with increased risk of certain types of cancer, developmental problems and birth defects.

A recent report by the American Academy of Pediatrics noted that "Children encounter pesticides daily and have unique susceptibilities to their potential toxicity. Acute poisoning risks are clear, and understanding of chronic health implications from both acute and chronic exposures are emerging." (*Pediatrics* 2012; 130:e1757-e1763).

Children and women who are or may become pregnant are among our most vulnerable populations, and the impact of chronic pesticide exposure, and the routine use of pesticides at schools by personnel without any training in toxicology or pediatric environmental health constitutes a threat to their health and safety. Even at the lowest levels, these chronic low-level exposures are being understood by researchers to constitute significant risks to human health.

Moreover, the latest research on endocrine-disrupting chemicals (including many pesticide products) is based on the fact that there are certain critical times during child development, especially puberty and pre-puberty, when the rapid growth of body systems can be disrupted from even extremely low-level exposures to toxins. As research continues, decision makers must take protective action. This is why the K-12 ban on the use of pesticides is an important step toward ensuring the health of our very youngest citizens. A similar law was enacted several years ago in New York and is being implemented with success.

The bill before you offers common-sense options for the emergency use of pesticides in the event of a public health emergency, in which case the threat posed by pests can be evaluated carefully against the potential harm to the health and well-being of Connecticut's school children.