



State of Connecticut
House of Representatives

Representative Gregory Haddad
54th Assembly District
Mansfield

Legislative Office Building
Hartford, Connecticut 06106
860-240-8585 or 800-842-8267
Gregory.Haddad@cga.ct.gov

Written Testimony of Gregory Haddad

Before the Connecticut General Assembly Environment Committee
March 15, 2013

In support of H.B. 5480, An Act Requiring An Assessment Of The Use Of Certain Pesticides At The University Of Connecticut Research Farm.

Good Morning Senator Meyer, Representative Gentile, Senator Chapin, Representative Shaban and members of the Environment Committee:

I am Gregory Haddad, State Representative from the 54th House district which is comprised of most of the Town of Mansfield including the main campus of the University of Connecticut.

I am here to testify in support of House Bill 5480, An Act Requiring an Assessment of the Use of Certain Pesticides at the University of Connecticut Research Farm. I introduced this legislation which you drafted into a Committee Bill to help resolve a long-standing dispute between the University of Connecticut and a group of Mansfield citizens who reside in a neighborhood adjacent to the farm. All of the properties that border the research facility or are nearby have private dug or deep water wells. For the purposes of open disclosure, I'd like you to know that I, myself, live in the neighborhood adjacent to the farm.

Like other farms, pesticides, herbicides, fungicides and insecticides are used during the regular course of business and the university has publicly disclosed use of some of these materials. These pesticides include many materials known to be potentially harmful, but are also used commercially. The number of pesticides used or stored at the farm is greater than 90. You get an idea of the breadth of chemicals and products used by looking at attachment C of the OLR report I've attached to my testimony. This is just a list of the non-proprietary pesticide application records for 2011.

Importantly, the UConn Plant Science Research and Education Facility is not like other agricultural farms in the state. I believe this farm to be the only university-run experimental research farm in Connecticut. As such, UConn uses pesticides in a manner that would not be allowed by other parties. Much of their work is aimed at increasing the allowable uses of commercially available pesticides. What is notable about these experiments is that they are using the materials in a manner inconsistent with the approved label recommendations. And much of this research is conducted under research grants

that prohibit the university from disclosing what the material is or how it is used. Additionally, while UConn contends that most of the pesticides are commercially available, they stop well short of guaranteeing that no new-to-market experimental pesticides are also being applied. Attachment D in the OLR research report lists proprietary pesticides applied at the research farm in 2009-2011. The records list 38 active ingredients that are not disclosed for proprietary reasons.

Many residents in neighboring properties are worried. They are concerned for their own health and well-being. Some have stopped drinking their well water altogether. Others have installed carbon filters. Some have had their water tested for the presence of the known pesticides. This effort is significantly hampered because the university will not disclose all of the materials because of the private, proprietary nature of the research. And so, it is impossible for a private well-water owner, or our local Department of Health, or anyone else to test for the presence of these pesticides in our drinking water.

UConn has implemented a testing regime using wells on the research farm property. What we know about their testing program is that they check their wells for the presence of only 30% of the pesticides used at the farm. They have repeatedly assured the residents that the testing regime is an adequate safeguard. But not surprisingly, many are unconvinced.

This bill would require an independent and comprehensive assessment of the farm's procedures for storing, handling, applying and testing for pesticides. The bill requires DEEP and DPH to report back to this committee if they find inadequate practices or have recommendations for new legislation that result from their assessment. I believe that residents deserve the peace of mind that can only come by subjecting UConn's pesticide use and testing regime to third party scrutiny.

This bill acknowledges that we have a special obligation to ensure the public's safety at this unique facility. Since the University of Connecticut is a state agency, the state would be liable if any issues arose that adversely impacted the environment or public health.

I have been working with the DEEP and with DPH to ensure that the assessment can be conducted within their available resources. I believe they can and that their technical expertise in this area will be critical to ensuring that best practices are employed at the farm and that safeguards are put in place to ensure that private drinking wells are safe from harm.

I wish I could report to you that this bill satisfies all of the residents in the neighborhood, but some feel that the bill does not go nearly far enough. As their neighbor and a resident with a well which is also at risk, I agree with them. As their legislator, I feel that this bill moves us and the university in the right direction and I am grateful that many in my neighborhood agree.



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