

**Testimony of Zoe Strickler in favor of Committee Bill No. 5480,
An Act Requiring an Assessment of the Use of Certain Pesticides
at the University of Connecticut Research Farm.**

March 15, 2013

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

My name is Zoe Strickler. I and my husband George Gibson, and our daughter Chloe, age 14, are ten-year residents of the Storrs Heights neighborhood. Our home and our well lie approximately 350 feet from the UConn Experimental Research Farm.

I, and my family, strongly support Bill No. 5480. As a parent of one of the children living in this community whose bodies and nervous systems are still in development, and who are growing up downhill and downwind from this test site, I am very concerned to know the possible effects on human health from any pesticides being used at the site (including any fungicides, herbicides, and insecticides that may fall under the broad term “pesticide.”)

The turf-grass research currently underway at the University Farm is sponsored by a private corporation with a commercial interest in the research. Our neighbors have been told by the University that of some *90 chemicals* being applied *in one study alone*, 31 cannot be disclosed due to confidentiality agreements with the sponsor. We have been told that because some of these chemicals are “experimental,” *tests do not yet exist* that can confirm whether they are seeping into local water supplies. We cannot find out how often the substances are applied, or in what quantities, nor can we confirm their safety for human exposure.

Like many, but not all, of the neighbors living in the vicinity of the UConn Research Farm we are a University family. My husband and I have both worked on research at the university and we understand well the mission of a publicly-funded institution; it is something of a sacred, public trust to conduct research that advances the public good. All research at a state institution should observe the Hippocratic dictum “first do no harm.” However, because the turf-grass research is privately funded, oversight for public safety is not built into the grant structure as would be the case with federal agency funding. Bill No. 5480 requires much

needed safety evaluation by appropriate State agencies – the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, and the Department of Public Health.

It seems important to mention that the results of this research are intended for end-use on golf courses. Golf courses, and other turf grass sites, are typically located in, or near, high-density areas of human habitation and often near public water sources. Individuals at risk from these chemicals are, therefore, not just the neighbors in Storrs Heights, but potentially residents of communities across the State of Connecticut and the U.S.

The School of Agriculture has stated publicly that its goal for this research is to evaluate the “efficacy” of the substances for turf-grass application, not their “toxicology.” However, the time to study the safety of a chemical or process intended for broad, public use is when its efficacy is first being assessed. It will not be in the interest of any party to this research, including the University, or the State of Connecticut, to discover ten years after wide release of these chemicals into domestic circulation that residents are succumbing to rare cancers and neurological disorders.

All sound scientific research is subject to verification by disinterested third parties. Appropriate oversight is what this bill proposes.

For the sake of Connecticut’s children please make passing this bill a priority this legislative session.

Thank you,

Zoe Strickler
24 Storrs Heights Road
Storrs, CT 06268