

**Written Testimony of Heather Lauver of The Pesticide-Free New Canaan Initiative, affiliated with the  
New Canaan Nature Center in New Canaan, CT)\_**

**Before the Connecticut General Assembly Environment Committee,**

**February 25, 2013**

Testimony in Support of:

**S.B. 914 AN ACT CONCERNING THE APPLICATION OF PESTICIDES AT MUNICIPAL PARKS**

My name is Heather Lauver, I am one of the co-founders of the Pesticide Free New Canaan Initiative in New Canaan, CT (aligned with the New Canaan Nature Center). I earned an MPH from Yale and have been practicing public health in a number of sectors for over 18 years. Our Initiative represents approximately two thousand people based on our mailing lists. We also work with the Chamber of Commerce, Harbor Watch in Westport, the local Highschool and regional gardening groups to reach thousands of people. We are improving awareness in our area about a growing number of harmful pesticides in our environment and water.

I am here because of my concern about the harm that synthetic pesticides cause on the body, particularly to children who are exposed to even low doses of pesticides. Several 2012 studies show significant increases in cancers, learning disabilities, and mood disorders from synthetic pesticides – we'd be happy to provide those references.

We support SB914 because it will advance our ability to safeguard the municipal parks that our families use, where our children play, where we sit to picnic.

- **It is your duty to protect the public.** To remind us of Rachel Carson's message: If the forefathers were here today, they'd say that we have the right not to be poisoned by these chemicals. We have few spaces left that are not contaminated and it is your government duty to safeguard those lands as long as they exist. Pesticides can be inhaled, ingested, absorbed through the skin. According to the CDC, every American has pesticides in their body, and the water in front of you today has some level of pesticides in it. Every stream sampled by the USGS was found to have at least one pesticide. This stuff comes from what we apply on our lands. Further, Manufacturers are not required to test for long term chronic health effects in humans, and they provide data to the EPA. The EPA does not conduct its own research. Nor does any state agency.
- **CT does not have adequate resources to monitor exposure.** Please note that while the EPA has about 900 people registering synthetic chemicals so they can be sold on the market, the CT DEEP in 2011 cut field agents to monitor pesticide contamination from 15 to 3 for the entire State. This means virtually no monitoring is occurring. If no public health personnel are involved in the decision to apply pesticides, it is very likely that pesticides will be applied, and done so without any repercussions.

- **Children have no voice and they play on these municipal lands.** Children are more susceptible to pesticide exposure, they have developing brains and organs that are greatly impacted by toxic chemicals. Schools often play their games at these parks, and town recreation departments hold activities, soccer games, etc. on these parks. On July 4, thousands of people come and sit on the lawn at Waveny park to watch fireworks. We hold public concerts on the lawns of municipal parks.
- We support PS914 that restricts application of synthetic pesticides on municipal parks to only the most emergent public health threats.
- **Improvements to PS914:**
  - We would like a stronger oversight so that the “health threat” mentioned in section C be reviewed by a health expert so that qualified personnel are making decisions about public health.
  - We would recommend a clearer definition of “licensee or designee of the licensee”. No one who has a financial conflict of interest should be making decisions about applying pesticides to public lands, particularly municipal parks. We would prefer that the parks manager be required to have written approval from a designated public health expert.
  - We would also like the language in section C to dictate that “the least harmful effective and organic pesticide must be used (not just considered) before opting for synthetic pesticides in the case of a health threat as determined by a public health expert.”