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**TESTIMONY TO THE CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
IN SUPPORT OF SB 914 AND SB 917 (PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM EXPOSURE TO
TOXIC PESTICIDES), AND HB 6439 (SAFE DISPOSAL OF UNUSED MEDICATIONS)**

William Cooke, Government Relations Director
Citizens Campaign for the Environment
February 25, 2013

Senator Meyer, Representative Gentile, distinguished members of the Environment Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is William Cooke, I represent Citizens Campaign for the Environment (CCE). CCE is an 80,000 member non-profit, non-partisan advocacy organization that works to protect public health and the natural environment. CCE is testifying today in support of SB 914, SB 917, and HB 6439.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, National Academy of Sciences, and American Public Health Association, among others, recognize the danger that pesticide exposure pose to children's health. The growing body of peer reviewed scientific evidence indicates that pesticide exposure can adversely affect a child's neurological, respiratory, immune, and endocrine systems, even at low levels. Long-term exposure to pesticides has even been linked to certain cancers, including non-Hodgkin lymphoma. *Citizens Campaign for the Environment strongly supports reducing children's exposure to toxic chemical pesticides wherever practical, especially on school green spaces and public playing fields.*

SB 914- AAC THE APPLICATION OF PESTICIDES AT MUNICIPAL PARKS

In 2007, the CT General Assembly set a nationwide precedent by banning the use of chemical pesticides on school grounds grades K-8, to protect our children where they learn and play. Since that law went into effect, schools across CT have successfully eliminated their use of hazardous pesticides while successfully and cost-effectively managing pest problems in school buildings and on school grounds, by using readily available and affordable non-toxic alternatives.

Banning the use of chemical pesticides at municipal parks and playing fields will help extend this critical children's health protection to all public parks and sports fields. Children are uniquely vulnerable to pesticide exposures due to their physiology and rapid growth, and also because of their close proximity to these pesticides during normal play. Children are also more susceptible to exposure due to their common hand to mouth activities. Leading medical experts

continue to urge the reduction of pesticide use as much as possible, especially on lawns and playing fields. *Citizens Campaign for the Environment strongly supports passage of this important legislation, as it will serve to protect children's health, while creating significant long-term financial savings for municipalities.*

SB 917- AAC THE USE OF CERTAIN MICROBIAL AND BIOCHEMICAL PESTICIDES AND GRUB CONTROL PRODUCTS ON SCHOOL GROUNDS

Since the prohibition of chemical pesticides on school playing fields went into effect in 2010, certain school districts have complained that they are not adequately equipped to treat grubs in a non-toxic way. This bill will allow groundskeepers to utilize certain non-toxic products that have been registered by the United States Environmental Protection Agency that are safe for use near children. Microbial and biochemical products used for lawn care are non-toxic to humans, and have been demonstrated to effectively treat grubs and weeds. This legislation will increase groundskeeper's access to safe, non-toxic products that will help protect our future generations while keeping green spaces free from grubs and dead spots. *CCE strongly supports expanding Connecticut's Natural Turf-Care policy to public parks and playing fields, while allowing school groundskeepers greater access to non-toxic grub and pest control products.*

HB 6439- AAC THE DISPOSAL AND COLLECTION OF UNUSED MEDICATIONS

The US Geological Survey has found low levels of drugs such as antibiotics, hormones, contraceptives, and steroids in 80% of the rivers and streams tested, and in drinking water supplies of over 40 million Americans. There are currently no local or statewide policies that protect ground and surface waters from contamination by preventing improper disposal of pharmaceutical drugs. The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) both recognize that incineration is the safest disposal policy for unused medication.

Pharmaceuticals enter our wastewater from two main sources, one critical one is the flushing of unused medication, which has become commonplace in the absence of formal drug disposal policies. Modern sewage treatment plants, septic systems, and drinking water infrastructure were never designed to remove these contaminants. While flushing is no longer a recommended disposal method in Connecticut, it remains common practice in many households and has even become the official disposal policy at many hospitals and long-term care facilities.

State-run drug take-back events have proven to be popular and highly effective, but are infrequent and may not be widely accessible to all residents in the state. By installing a permanent drop-off location for unused and unwanted pharmaceutical at police departments across Connecticut, residents will have a consistent and secure alternative to flushing unwanted medications.

Installing a lock-box available for the safe and anonymous round the clock disposal of unused medication also helps keep unused meds off the street and out of the black market, which saves states and municipalities money, by limiting the number of arrests and prosecutions for the illicit re-sale of prescription pharmaceuticals. Municipalities have a variety of cost-effective options with regards to design and installation of drop boxes, ranging from re-furbishing old mailboxes, to specially designed drop boxes that can be ordered from a central distributor. The cost of installation can range from as little as \$500 to \$1,000 dollars for a pre-fabricated drop box. These are one-time costs for the life of the

program, which can easily be offset with the money saved by preventing the trial and conviction of a single criminal drug charge in any given municipality. ***CCE strongly supports implementing a statewide pharmaceutical disposal plan that keeps unused medication out of Connecticut's water and off of our streets.*** This legislation will help to ensure that our morning coffee will contain milk and sugar, not antibiotics, Lipitor and Viagra.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today and CCE looks forward to working with you on these important issues.

Respectfully submitted,

William Cooke
Government Relations Director