



CCM 2013 Testimony

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CHILDRENS COMMITTEE

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The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) is Connecticut's statewide association of towns and cities and the voice of local government - your partners in governing Connecticut. Our members represent over 92% of Connecticut's population. We appreciate the opportunity to testify on bills of interest to towns and cities.

CCM opposes SB 981 – “An Act Concerning Pesticides on School Grounds.”

This bill would expand the current onerous ban on pesticide application on K-8 school grounds to include high schools.

Since the passage of the ban on pesticide use on certain school grounds, local groundskeepers and public works directors across the state have been reporting increased pest populations, both insect and plant, and rapidly deteriorating fields as a result of the current statutory restrictions on K-8 school grounds.

In November 2012, EPA released its updated strategic plan for implementing school Integrated Pest Management (IPM) programs citing, **“full implementation of Integrated Pest Management is cost effective, reduces exposure to pests and pesticides, and reduces pesticide use and pest complaints.”** Connecticut's restrictions have continued to be in place for several years now, even though EPA has continued to identify IPM as *“a safer, and usually less costly option for effective pest management in the school community,”* which *“employs commonsense strategies to reduce sources of food, water and shelter for pests in your school buildings and grounds,”* further taking *“advantage of all pest management strategies, including judicious careful use of pesticides when necessary.”*

There are several bills before the legislature, this one included, that will only further exacerbate the problems, or make a weak attempt to use a surgical approach to small portions of a complex issue.

CONTINUING INTENTIONAL MISREPRESENTATION

In recent testimony before the Education Committee and the Environment Committee, and in a number of other contexts over the last several years, pro-ban individuals continue to hold up certain towns as the “poster children” for success within the parameters of this ban – the Town of Branford being one of them. **This is absolutely not accurate.**

We have recently learned from a direct conversation between the Glastonbury Parks Superintendent and Branford Director of Recreation, that while Branford is certainly in compliance with the ban on K-8 school grounds, ***they are indeed using pesticides for the treatment and care of their parks and recreation fields.*** If the ban is so easy to comply with and the alternatives are effective, why aren't they implementing the same approach on ***all*** fields?

Similar circumstances have been eluded to regarding other municipalities that have also been characterized as completely pesticide free.

In addition, testimony from another pro-ban individual was given to the Environment Committee earlier this week stating that grounds managers “*lack the knowledge and motivation to do the job right*”. This sort of language is not only inflammatory and unhelpful in finding some common ground on this issue, but **it is a flat out mischaracterization of a group of highly professional and trained municipal employees across the state.**

Unfortunately, these individuals continue to make such statements on the record as fact and they are not disputed.

WHAT IS NEEDED? A BALANCED COLLABORATION TO DEVELOP SOLID STATE POLICY

It is time to stop the practice of relying on conjecture, and roll up our sleeves for an in-depth and professional examination of facts to guide Connecticut toward sound public policy.

It is important to note, that municipal officials are second-to-none in ensuring the safety and health of children. Not only are municipal officials parents, but they have a fiduciary duty to protect and defend the public’s interest.

Because of this responsibility, and the continued debate as to whom has the best and right information about these products, **CCM supports the creation of a balanced working group/task force to thoroughly examine and vet the facts** surrounding field management and provide recommendations as to how state policy on this issue should be structured

Chairmen of the Planning & Development Committee and Environment Committee had promised to put forth such a proposal, and ensure a balanced collaboration on a solution., and not push forward other pesticide related legislation. However, we are concerned that two bills were recently voted out of the Environment Committee that should instead have their subject matter vetted by this forthcoming working group/task force.

CCM stresses the need for a **comprehensive approach** for a statewide policy position and ensure that the entity created to establish it be **composed of individuals representing all facets of the issue** and structured in a manner that **all participants will feel the resulting recommendations are an agreeable collaboration and compromise**. This will be a hard goal to achieve, but with careful thought and consideration it can be accomplished.

- **CCM urges that this bill not be passed**, but rather that the Committee **support a comprehensive proposal to convene a working group/task force to establish statewide policy**, which requires among other things that (1) **the subject matter of the various proposed individual bills be included as part of the charge** for discussion– and – (2) **allow the use of grub control products, as outlined in SB 917, with a one year sunset** to ensure this issue is also addressed in the statewide policy.



If you have any questions, please contact Kachina Walsh-Weaver, State Relations Manager, kwash-walsh@ccm-ct.org or (203) 710-9525.