

Middletown Project Green Lawn

TESTIMONY

In Support of

SB 981 An Act Concerning Pesticides on School Grounds

Children Committee Public Hearing

March 5, 2013

Dear Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban and members of the Children Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to support this important issue. Project Green Lawn is a Middletown-based public awareness campaign created to educate residents, businesses and institutions about the health and environmental risks of traditional lawn care chemicals and the benefits of organic lawn care. Members include children's advocates, environmental groups, members of the City's Recycling Commission and Conservation Commission and public health professionals. Project Green Lawn has hosted a variety of public education events since 2005 and has worked closely with the City to improve organic lawn care efforts on municipal grounds.

SB 981 An Act Concerning Pesticides on Schools Grounds is an important and necessary step forward to protecting the health of all school children in Connecticut. Currently, state law does not allow lawn care pesticides on school grounds K-8. This bill will extend that ban of these toxic chemicals to high schools.

There are compelling reasons not to allow lawn care pesticides on school grounds. 19 studies have linked the 30 commonly used lawn pesticides with cancer, 13 studies have linked them with birth defects, 21 with reproductive effects-, 15 with neurotoxicity or abnormal brain development. Other studies have linked these pesticides with hyperactivity, developmental delays, behavioral disorder and motor dysfunction. All children are particularly susceptible because of their smaller bodies and rapid growth. Once the pesticides are applied, they can be tracked inside the schools (and our homes) where they can persist for long periods of time, exposing children even if they were not in contact with the grass.

Considering the overwhelming evidence why would we put our children's health at risk for cosmetic reasons?

Middletown Project Green Lawn

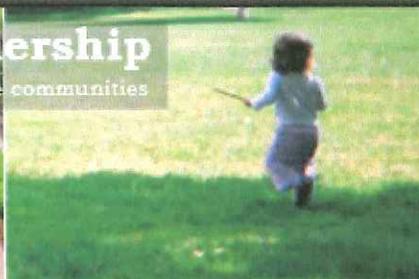
There are safe, effective and affordable alternatives to these toxic pesticides for both grounds and fields. Lawns and fields can be maintained to the highest of standards without the use of dangerous chemicals. It may be a different way of doing business for typical municipal grounds employees and landscapers, but safe, proven methods do exist and many municipalities have made the switch successfully, including Branford and Cheshire. Our friends in New York have a state law which bans lawn care pesticides on all schools and offers numerous examples of beautiful turfs maintained organically.

Considering there are so many unknowns and so much plausible evidence about the dangers of these chemicals, it seems unconscionable to continue to expose our children to these risks. CT made the important step of protecting its younger school children, but now it is time to protect our high school children as well.

Thank you for your time. Should you have any questions, please contact Project Green Lawn staff, Kim O'Rourke, Middletown's Recycling Coordinator, at 860-344-3526 or kim.orourke@MiddletownCT.Gov.

Watershed Partnership

Promoting safe, healthy, sustainable communities



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Background

Lawn Pesticide Fact Sheet

- Of 30 commonly used lawn pesticides, 19 have studies linking them with cancer, 13 are linked with birth defects, 21 with reproductive effects, 15 with neurotoxicity or abnormal brain development.¹
- Children are particularly susceptible because of their rapid growth and decreased ability to detoxify toxins.^{2, 3} This is particularly true for the developing child in utero.
- Studies link some lawn pesticides to hyperactivity, developmental delays, behavioral disorder, and motor dysfunction.^{4, 5, 6}
- A Study in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute found that home and garden use of pesticides can increase the risk of childhood leukemia by almost seven times.⁷
- The lag time between environmental exposure and the development of lymphoma can be as long as 20 years.⁸
- Lawn pesticides can be tracked inside of schools where they can persist for long periods of time contaminating air, dust, surfaces, and carpets and exposing children to these toxic chemicals even if they are not in contact with the grass.⁹
- There is provision for pesticide use if there is a condition that threatens the health and safety of the children. For example, an underground wasp nest or an infestation of ticks.
- There are significant gaps in the safety testing of toxic lawn pesticides.¹⁰
 - Lawn pesticides are not tested for long term toxicity unless they are also used on food crops.
 - Lawn pesticides are not tested in the combinations and formulations in which they are actually used. Yet, these combinations and formulations can be more toxic than the pure active ingredient.
 - It is the chemical companies themselves that supply the safety testing data to the Environmental Protection Agency.
- Lawn pesticides can contaminate well water. 11% of residential wells tested in a Connecticut town showed the presence of one or more lawn pesticides.¹¹
- There are safe, effective, affordable alternatives to using toxic lawn pesticides. A number of towns in Connecticut have successfully switched to pesticide-free organic lawn care.^{12, 13}
- With so many unknowns and with plausible evidence of harm to children, it makes no sense for our children to be involuntarily exposed to the unnecessary use of these toxic chemicals especially when there are safe, effective, affordable alternatives.

References

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- EPA registration requires only that the pure chemical compound of the pesticide be tested.
- A survey of Private Drinking Water Wells For Lawn and Tree Care Pesticides in a Connecticut Town, Environment and Human Health, Inc.1999.
- See the Northeast Organic Farming Association Connecticut Chapter's Information on organic land care. www.dthofa.org/OrganicLandCare/OLC.htm
- Managing Healthy Sports Fields: A Guide to Using Organic Materials for Low-Maintenance and Chemical-Free Playing Fields by Paul D. Sachs, January 2004

