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TO: Sen. Danté Bartolomeo and Rep. Diana Urban, Chairmen,
And the Members of the Committee on Children

FROM: Rivers Alliance of Connecticut

DATE: March 5, 2013

PUBLIC HEARING

RE: **RB 981, AAC Pesticides on School Grounds**

Rivers Alliance of Connecticut is the statewide, non-profit coalition of river organizations, individuals, and businesses formed to protect and enhance Connecticut's waters by promoting sound water policies, uniting and strengthening the state's many river groups, and educating the public about the importance of water stewardship. Our 500 members include almost all of the state's river and watershed conservation groups, representing many thousand Connecticut residents.

Thank you for raising this important bill. Rivers Alliance strongly supports strict limits on the use of pesticides. Our mission focuses on clean water and healthy aquatic habitats. The presence of pesticides in all the nation's rivers and streams (US Geological Survey, 2006) is a major contributor to the dramatic die-off of freshwater species in the USA and around the globe.

Some of the literature supporting the safety of pesticides maintains that, while the substances may be harmful or lethal to frogs, fish, and turtles, they are not harmful to humans (used as directed, of course). Read a little further in the literature, and you will find recommendations that pregnant women, babies, and toddlers should avoid exposure; farm workers should handle the products with care; factory workers should wear safety masks, and so forth.

The history of pesticide use is one long retreat from claims that pesticides are safe. Every pesticide contaminating soil, groundwater, and surface water in Connecticut was at one time pronounced and promoted as safe. As one pesticide after another is found to be harmful, replacement products appear with the promise that this time our worries will be over.

Who's Got the Science Right?

In Connecticut, the debate between pro- and anti-pesticide advocates is coming down to the question: who's got the science right? At this point, the science is so

cautionary, even alarming, that prudence demands not exposing children to optional, cosmetic pesticide products such as lawn-care products.

In December 2012, the American Academy of Pediatrics, issued a policy statement titled *Pesticide Exposure in Children*. You can read it at <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/130/6/e1757.full> Or we would be glad to supply you a copy. Here is what the nation's leading pediatricians say:

"Epidemiologic evidence demonstrates associations between early life exposure to pesticides and pediatric cancers, decreased cognitive function, and behavioral problems. ... Recommendations:

Three overarching principles can be identified: (1) pesticide exposures are common and cause both acute and chronic effects; (2) pediatricians need to be knowledgeable in pesticide identification, counseling, and management; and (3) governmental actions to improve pesticide safety are needed. Whenever new public policy is developed or existing policy is revised, the wide range of consequences of pesticide use on children and their families should be considered. The American Academy of Pediatrics, through its chapters, committees, councils, sections, and staff, can provide information and support for public policy advocacy efforts. See <http://www.aap.org/advocacy.html> for additional information or contact chapter leadership."

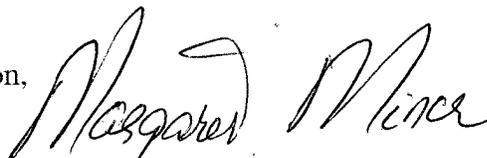
Similarly, in May 2012, *Public Health Nursing* published "Potential Health Effects Related to Pesticide Use on Athletic Fields" by Robyn Gilden, Ph.D. et al. The summary of conclusions reads: *"We need to examine opportunities to reduce their [children's] exposures. Both policy and practice questions are raised."*

You have before you a critical publi- health decision and opportunity. We urge you to listen to these responsible pediatricians and public health nurses and consider "the wide range of consequences of pesticide use on children and their families." There is no reason to put children in harm's way by exposure to pesticides that are not absolutely needed for a public health purpose.

Two billion pounds of pesticides are applied in the USA annually. This is a massive experiment in toxicology. Let's at least keep our schools as clean and safe as possible.

We have at Rivers Alliance, lists of the hundreds of pesticides approved in Connecticut and information on their effects. We would be glad to share this information or help in any other way.

Thanks for your attention,



Margaret Miner, Executive Director