

**Testimony of Donna Becotte for the Environment Committee
In Support of HB 5480, An Act Requiring An Assessment Of The Use Of Certain
Pesticides At The University Of Connecticut Research Farm
March 15, 2013**

Senator Meyer, Representative Gentile, and members of the Environment Committee, my name is Donna Becotte, and I am submitting testimony in support of HB 5480, An Act Requiring An Assessment Of The Use Of Certain Pesticides At The University Of Connecticut Research Farm.

I live at 28 Storrs Heights Road in the Storrs section of the town of Mansfield. My husband, Gregg Haddad, and I chose to build our house there nearly 9 years ago because of the friendly neighborhood, the closeness to the University, and the peace and quiet of Storrs Heights.

We have a voluntary neighborhood association to deal with issues of concern for the betterment of our community. A few years ago, I began hearing my neighbors talking about the UConn Farm behind the houses across the street. And after I started paying attention, I found out that the Farm was an experimental farm and that new research contracts were being signed for turf grass and other experimental projects there. Because I can see the farm field through my front windows, I decided to get involved with a sub-committee of our association to investigate any health issues that might stem from the pesticides being used there.

What I discovered was that we were coming up against a brick wall. We were told by University representatives of the proprietary nature of the research contracts, and that they would not disclose some pesticides to us. I learned of the tests that the University ran at the farm to track nitrates in the ground, and that they didn't test at peak times when the compounds were likely to show up. And I saw the unwillingness of University officials to go further to ensure our well-being beyond what was already being done. We had asked the officials not to use compounds they cannot test for, and they said they would not change their policy.

So, right now, we are stuck. Our community is wary of the information we have been given by the University- wary enough that many of us have started changing how we use our tap water. Many neighbors, including us, use filters for our drinking water, or have contracted to get bottled water instead. Some are looking at buying expensive whole-house water filters. The University has assured us of our safety, but we feel uncomfortable risking our health with those assurances.

What we really need is an independent entity to look at the experimental farm, to make sure our health is not being threatened, as HB 5480 will do. It is a step in the right direction. I am glad that the University is willing to take this step with us, to work toward a solution for our concerns. Once we all know the true impact that increased experimentation is having on our community, we can act accordingly. My hope is that UConn's assurances are accurate. Then I can start drinking water straight from the tap again.

Thank you for your consideration.

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