



CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF ATHLETIC DIRECTORS, INC.

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March 17, 2014

Testimony Regarding:

SB-443: AN ACT CONCERNING PESTICIDES ON SCHOOL GROUNDS, PARKS, PLAYGROUNDS, ATHLETIC FIELDS AND MUNICIPAL GREENS

My name is Fred Balsamo, Executive Director for the Connecticut Association of Athletic Directors (CAAD), which represents the athletic directors in 188 high schools and 150 middle school athletic programs across the state.

We can all agree that the environment is a major concern to all of us. However, CAAD's primary concern is in student safety and legislation of this type can have an adverse effect on the increase of injuries to our athletes, including concussions. Members of our organization have reported to us that as a result of the current K-8 ban, schools have lost the use of their fields or they have become dangerously compacted. Most high school fields require extensive use in order to implement a comprehensive athletic program. Prudent use of chemical treatments is necessary to allow maximum usage of those fields.

There have been several notable studies conducted as it relates to injuries caused by poor field conditions. We have contacted an independent field testing lab, Sports Labs USA, which is contracted to evaluate the safety of all 31 NFL fields and they write— ***“In regard to natural grass fields: it is our opinion that the inherent safety and ability to prevent injury associated with these fields is directly related to the blade-density of the grass and the ability to properly maintain that density. It is also our opinion that it is not possible to maintain the density and growth, required for safe play, nor adequately defend the natural growth process against the impact of frequent athletic events, without employing significant chemical treatments and/or enhancements.”*** (see attached)

Furthermore, in a 2011 University of Iowa study it is stated – ***“Field hardness increased the incidence of lower extremity injuries in football”*** and a study Penn State conducted in 1981 ***“ 20% of Injuries reported and treated for football could have been avoided if the fields were softer, better cared for and had less compacted soil”*** and also at Penn State in 2004 – ***10% of concussions were caused by a head hitting the surface of the field.”***

We are coming to the end of one of the worst winters in history for the frequency of storms. The State of Connecticut allows our cities and towns to apply chemical treatments to our streets and roads in the name of safety. We implore you to allow the same concern for safety to guide you in allowing the use of EPA registered chemicals on our athletic fields. The ban you seek will expose our municipalities and our state to litigation should a child be severely injured as a result if a total ban.

Additionally, since the July 1, 2010 K-8 ban, schools have reported having problems with grub and tick populations, poison ivy taking over fence lines, planting beds and boundary areas as well as poor compacted athletic fields just to name a few of the problems. All of these issues present a hazard to students because the ban does not allow any EPA registered pest controls to be used. There are enough failed attempts on record of using only organic materials to control these problems to prove it simply does not work. SB 443 would devastate high school athletic programs and increase injuries.

Sincerely,

Fred Balsamo

Fred Balsamo, CMAA, Executive Director
Connecticut Association of Athletic Directors