

Testimony In Support of SB 443

An Act Concerning the Application of Pesticides at Parks, Playgrounds, Athletic Fields, and Municipal Greens.

Good morning, my name is Terri Eickel and I want to thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 443, An Act Concerning the Application of Pesticides at Parks, Playground, Athletic Fields, and Municipal Greens. I am the Executive Director of the Interreligious Eco-Justice Network – we are a faith-based environmental organization and on behalf of the hundreds of congregations and thousands of people of faith that I represent, I want to urge you to support this bill. Pesticides are some of the most toxic chemicals known to man and have been linked to cancer, birth defects, and developmental delays.

- A recent study published in the journal Neurology found that low-level pesticide exposure increased the risk of Parkinson’s disease. <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/272097.php>
- Another study, released in the spring of 2013 by the National Institute of Health found excess cancer risk among those applying pesticides and those who were bystanders to the procedure. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23322675>
- A study by the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center that was published in Nov 2013 found that women exposed to two pesticides classified as organochlorine pesticides had an increased risk of endometriosis of 50% - 70%. <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/268399.php> Both of these pesticides have estrogenic properties, which is why they are able to promote hormone-based disease. Even though these two pesticides are now banned, researchers felt that these pesticides persist in the environment so strongly that women are still at risk. I can say with certainty that these are not the only two estrogenic pesticides that are still in use. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1241915/>
- According to a study by the National Toxicology Program, we are exposed to between 3,570 – 7,500 chemicals daily – and potentially all of them are within the “safe” levels as prescribed by the industry, but taken together, we are exposed to 35 times to 75 times the dose considered toxic to animals. Another study by Richard Relyea of Pittsburgh University found that pesticides and other toxic chemicals were much more damaging and carcinogenic when combined.

Pesticides are clearly unsafe for humans. It takes only 26 seconds for chemicals to enter your bloodstream. Picture this – it’s the Fourth of July. You bring your baby (or your grandbaby) to the municipal green to watch the fireworks. It’s hot and it’s the Fourth of July, so your baby has some sort of ridiculously adorable jumper involving stars and maybe a few stripes. Your baby crawls off the blanket and on to the grass, getting their feet, legs, arms, and hands in contact with the grass. 26 seconds is all it takes for the pesticides that have been sprayed onto the grass to enter your baby’s bloodstream.

We have a moral, ethical, and spiritual responsibility to take care of the planet and to take care of its inhabitants. Toxic pesticides are not in keeping with this ethic and we must phase them out now – the risk to public health is too great if we wait.

On a personal note, I am also a cancer survivor and I can tell you that avoiding toxins is a huge part of my survivorship plan. I was diagnosed three and a half years ago with advanced breast cancer. I didn't have a family history and I was a total health nut – all of my doctors were completely confused – how did someone like me end up so very, very sick? I believe that environmental toxins played a significant role.

I did every treatment under the sun – chemo, surgery, radiation – I was in active treatment for a year and a half. I also investigated alternative and integrative approaches and have read countless studies on lifestyle, diet, and toxins as they relate to cancer. All of my oncologists will tell say that toxic chemicals not only contribute to the development of cancer, but also to its growth. This process, called carcinogenesis, doesn't just trigger the disease – it continues after the disease has started. Thus, it is imperative for someone like me to avoid toxins as much as possible. And I do avoid them, but choosing what I eat and drink and clean with – very carefully. But I can't choose what toxic pesticides someone else is going to use on a park and that elevated risk seems unfair. I'm doing my best to beat this disease and it isn't fair that I should have to be exposed to the very substances that contribute to its growth.

Finally, pesticides don't contribute to healthy lawns or healthy turf. Like a candy bar that gives you a sugar rush, but ultimately leaves you depleted, pesticides provide artificial nutrients that result in shorter root systems. These short root systems make the turf less stable and the grass less able to draw nutrients and water from deep in the soil. The land becomes addicted to these toxic chemicals just to survive, which means we need to continue applying them.

We can do better. We must do better. We have to do more to protect public health and the environment from these dangerous toxic pesticides. Please support HB 5330 and ban these harmful chemicals.