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Children Committee –March 6, 2014

Written Testimony for SB No. 46 -An Act Concerning Pesticides on School Grounds

Good Afternoon Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban, Senator Linares, Representative Betts and members of the Children Committee. My name is David G. Lenihan and I am the legislative liaison for the Connecticut Association of School Business Officials (CASBO). I am also a retired School Business Manager with over 14 years of experience in this field and a past president of CASBO.

CASBO is a non-profit professional association that represents school business officials (SBOs) throughout the state of Connecticut. SBO's are responsible for most aspects of school business and operations. This includes, but not limited to, developing and monitoring school district budgets, as well as overseeing school maintenance and operations, including field preparation and care.

To this end, CASBO has always made the safety of children its highest priority. We realize that we do not live in a risk free world and that it is impossible to shield children from all risks. Our goals are to identify all risks associated with school safety and develop comprehensive programs that will manage and mitigate such risks in a safe, reliable and cost effective manner. It is within this context that we make the following comments.

Since July 1, 2010, there has been a ban on the use of EPA registered pesticides on public school grounds K to 8. Since the ban has been in place, many school fields have been damaged severely and some rendered unplayable, despite the efforts of grounds staff to maintain these fields using more expensive organic materials and/or labor-intensive manual procedures. These materials and procedures are not effective in addressing pest problems.

As a result, not only have pest populations grown without controls but other unintended consequences have occurred. These include, but not limited to, invasive plants (i.e. poison ivy), ticks, tree disease, and playing surfaces that are very hard and uneven. All these issues present serious health and safety hazards to our students.

Any effort to expand the ban on pesticide use to the high school level will lead to many more athletic fields and school grounds becoming unsafe and unplayable.

CASBO, as well as many other municipal organizations, believes that a comprehensive, balanced approach that safely controls pests and addresses all other safety issues is a far better way to ensure the safety of our school children.

CASBO fully supports the U.S. EPA recommended Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach to care for all school grounds. IPM is an effective and environmentally sensitive approach that worked very successfully on school grounds prior to the ban and we believe will be safe and effective in the future.

Thank You

