

March 17, 2014

Dear Members of the Environment Committee –

I would have loved to come and testify in person to you today but cannot due to illness. My name is David Golembeski and I a lifelong resident of New Milford. I am writing to urge you to **strongly oppose** Senate Bill #443 – AN ACT CONCERNING PESTICIDES ON SCHOOL GROUNDS, PARKS, PLAYGROUNDS, ATHLETIC FIELDS AND MUNICIPAL GREENS. I graduated from the University of Connecticut in 2008 with a B.S. degree in Turfgrass and Soil Science as well as a secondary major in Horticulture and hold a supervisory pesticide license from the DEEP in the ornamentals and turf category. Currently, I am employed as the golf course superintendent at Pomperaug Golf Club in Southbury.

Expanding the pesticide ban further from the K-8 schools where it already exists does not make much sense when it comes to safety and aesthetics. All licensed supervisory applicators whether they are athletic field managers, landscapers, golf course superintendents, or parks directors follow the widely accepted principles of Integrated Pest Management or IPM. According to the US EPA “Integrated pest management (IPM) is the control strategy of choice for homeowners, growers, and commercial applicators. IPM is an approach to pest management that **blends all available management techniques - nonchemical and chemical - into one strategy**: Monitor pest problems, use nonchemical pest control, and resort to pesticides only when pest damage exceeds an economic or aesthetic threshold.” Licensed applicators are not going to use synthetic pesticides just to use them – they are used very judiciously when it makes the most economic or agronomic sense. While in some instances a non-synthetic chemical control combined with other agronomic practices may achieve perfectly acceptable results, however in others it may not. If this bill is passed the tool of properly registered EPA pesticides will be taken out of the toolbox of these athletic field and park managers that are slated to be affected. Since the ban went into effect on the K-8 schools there have been plenty of horror stories regarding poor field conditions at those schools which I am sure you will hear about today from folks across the state.

When it comes to turfgrass there are three main categories of pests – weeds, insects, and diseases. On golf courses the number one concern is diseases with insects and weeds being very important secondary pests. On athletic fields insects and weeds are the number one concern where turfgrass diseases are normally not as much of a problem. When it comes to treating the common insects and weeds, applications of proven synthetic EPA registered products can often be made very sparingly with great results. While there are some organic and other alternative options out there that can be used, the results are all over the board **without** continued scientifically proven results. Additionally, these products must often be used in higher quantities than synthetic pesticides and promoting their use creates a much greater financial burden on already cash strapped municipalities.

The number one insect issue on athletic fields and many other turf areas is by far white grubs. These little white c-shaped creatures do most of their damage in the late summer / early fall time frame with some also occurring in the spring. They sever the roots of the grass plant allowing the turf to be easily torn up like a carpet allowing for bare spots that not only cause obvious safety concerns but look very unsightly as well. There are a few synthetic products that can be used very effectively at extremely low rates which can be used on a preventative basis to control these creatures. This is a one shot deal and grub control is relatively guaranteed for the season. If you wait and see if the grubs come it is often too late. The damage is already done and the only way to achieve a level of control is to use a somewhat harsher chemical that costs much more money on a cost per acre basis when compared to the one time preventative treatment. Also, if damage is done more money must be spent to repair the affected turf areas and already limited municipal field space will be further reduced if a field is deemed unplayable.

With weeds the same type of thing as with insects holds true. We all know crabgrass is a very unsightly nuisance weed that comes year after year. Crabgrass is considered a summer annual that begins its germination cycle annually in late April / early May when the soil temperatures begin to warm up and if not controlled it will proliferate the landscape come summer time. When we approach the fall it begins to die off and it is totally killed with the first frost. In controlling crabgrass, it is similar to the white grub scenario described above – a one (or sometimes two) shot deal of a low cost, low rate proven EPA registered synthetic product to prevent infestation. This application is made in the spring and prevents germination of the crabgrass seed from the soil. Once the crabgrass becomes established it is not only unsightly but unsafe for athletic fields. Its courser leaf blade can trip up athletes when present in large or small patches while actively growing. The worst thing though (in regards to athletic fields) with crabgrass comes in the late summer / early fall when it starts to die because it creates bare patches in the turf areas which can lead to increased injuries to our young athletes. The same scenario as stated previously applies in needing to spend time and money to repair damaged areas, etc. In terms of other weeds that cause problems in turfgrass stands, the list is plentiful. Depending on the infestation on the site, the certified applicator needs all of the tools possible to either spot treat or spot remove the weed(s) present depending on the situation and what makes the most agronomic and economic sense.

In conclusion, I strongly urge you to **oppose Senate Bill #443** and urge all of your colleges on the environment committee to do the same. It is important that all certified applicators have the ability to select and utilize the most effective and least toxic EPA registered pesticide available whether it is synthetic or organic based in their IPM based program.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

David R. Golembeski