



## *The Jonah Center for Earth and Art*

*P.O. Box 854*

*Middletown CT 06457*

*(860) 398-3771*

*[www.thejonahcenter.org](http://www.thejonahcenter.org)*

*email [Hall.john.c@sbcglobal.net](mailto:Hall.john.c@sbcglobal.net)*

### TESTIMONY

To the Environment Committee

In Support of SB 443

AN ACT CONCERNING PESTICIDES ON SCHOOL GROUNDS, PARKS,  
PLAYGROUNDS, ATHLETIC FIELDS AND MUNICIPAL GREENS

By The Board of Directors

The Jonah Center for Earth and Art

March 14, 2014

The Jonah Center for Earth and Art is a nonprofit environmental education and advocacy organization in the greater Middletown area. For the last 10 years, we have worked collaboratively with other institutions and organizations, such as the City of Middletown, Wesleyan University, Middlesex Community College, and a variety of other environmental nonprofits. Health and safety for humans as well as for the creatures that inhabit our woodlands, meadows, and waterways is central to our mission.

SB 443, An Act Concerning Pesticides on Schools Grounds, Parks, Playgrounds, Athletic Fields, and Municipal Greens is an important and necessary step forward to protect the health of all Connecticut residents, especially children, and to foster the change in culture necessary for our cities and towns to protect citizens from toxic chemicals that are harmful and unnecessary for cultivation of healthy lawns and playing fields. Although state law currently prohibits lawn care pesticides on K-8 school grounds, protections are needed for high school students and for the general public. The “lawn chemical culture” in our society is strong and resistant to facing the known dangers posed by these chemicals, not to mention the dangers that have been undocumented. Legislation does not immediately change that culture, but without legislation, we are essentially stuck with the commercial forces that continue to promote the sale and application of dangerous chemicals where children play.

The dangers of lawn chemicals have long been minimized and denied by the lawn chemical industry. The link between common lawn chemicals and cancer, especially in children, is increasingly well-established. In addition, there is mounting evidence that such chemicals are endocrine interrupters whose effects may not immediately be identified as pathological but contribute to public health concerns such as obesity. Exposure to these chemicals takes place not only while children are on playgrounds and athletic fields, but afterwards too because the chemicals are carried away by shoes and clothing.

*Our mission: to foster sustainable relationships among people, other creatures, energy resources, and the environment and to promote interdisciplinary community partnerships in scientific, artistic, and other cultural endeavors.*

Furthermore, some towns such as Branford have demonstrated that lush, healthy, athletic fields are achievable through organic, chemical-free lawn care methods. These methods may cost somewhat more initially while the lawns and fields are making the transition, but in the long run organic methods are less expensive. In the fall of 2013, the Executive Director of the Jonah Center, John Hall, visited the Town of Branford with other Middletown residents and members of Project Green Lawn to learn about Branford's lawn care methods. We were extremely impressed with the success of their program to care for their athletic fields.

The Jonah Center for Earth and Art represents approximately 400 constituents in the greater Middletown area. While we obviously cannot speak for each of these individuals, our programs on the dangers of lawn chemicals and on organic (non-chemical) lawn care have been well-attended for many years.

Thank you for considering this testimony in support of S.B. 443.

Members of the Board of Directors

Judith Walsh  
Susan Hall  
Elizabeth Emery  
Mark Meyering  
Jonathan Morris  
Krishna Winston

Executive Director

John Hall

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