



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

At ScottsMiracle-Gro, we have been helping people – from avid green thumbs to first time gardeners – care for their own piece of the Earth for more than 145 years. As the lawn and garden industry leader, we are the stewards of the world’s most recognized and used lawn and garden brands. We don’t take that responsibility lightly, which is why we conduct extensive research to drive innovation and ensure our products can be used responsibly in the environment. We have an established and proud history of partnering with environmental groups in both the U.S. and Europe to solve problems and to improve the environment.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide information to the committee about our research and development initiative related to potential grass seed products.

Innovation Focused on the Environment

Our history of innovation dates back more than 100 years, when we first began selling grass seed through the mail in the early 1900's. Since that time, our scientific research and development efforts have helped homeowners care for their lawns and landscapes.

Over the past decade, our focus has been on creating more sustainable products. We have led our industry by eliminating phosphorous and reducing nitrogen levels in lawn fertilizer. Our pesticide portfolio has been focused on ready-to-use products, which results in less active ingredients being applied and being done so with methods that are safer for consumer use. Throughout our growing media business – including our facility in Lebanon, CT where we employ more than 100 people – we have focused on developing soil amendments that result in less water being used to maintain healthy gardens and potted plants. We believe our U.S. growing media operation is now the largest user of recycled green waste in North America.

We are most proud of the work we are doing with grass seed. Our team of researchers across the United States, working in collaboration with some of America’s best universities, has been focused on developing new varieties of grass with the following goals in mind:

- **Less mowing:** Current innovation, not yet in the market, would result in slower growing grass that could be mowed much less often. This could eventually deliver enormous environmental and economic benefit to homeowners, commercial property owners as well as municipal and state governments.
- **Less fertilizer use:** Our research to date has proven that slower growing grasses would need fewer nutrients to stay green and healthy
- **Less pesticide use:** By developing tolerance to more environmentally friendly weed control products, we believe these grasses would lead to reduced use of pesticides.



- **Drought tolerance:** It is also our belief that slower growing grasses have the potential for needing significantly less water to remain healthy.

We have seen success in our efforts to date, but the grass seed is still in the research and development phase. It is not currently available for sale and is unlikely to be until further market and field research is completed.

However, as part of this research, the seed will be tested in a very limited manner in select residential and commercial settings near our headquarters in Ohio. We are expanding our testing in Ohio because we believe the vision outlined above is attainable. It would be hard to disagree that this vision directly addresses some of the most common concerns expressed by policy makers, NGO's and other stakeholders.

It is also important to stress that under the comprehensive, coordinated federal regulatory process, the United States Department of Agriculture has confirmed that the enhanced grasses in our development program are not a plant pest and do not present a noxious weed threat to the environment. We have been actively and regularly communicating with the Agency and other stakeholders as we move through the development process.

Stifling Innovation is a Dangerous Precedent

Our vision for the grass seed innovation outlined above would be denied to Connecticut homeowners if the current amendment is passed. While we respect the concerns expressed by those who support the proposed amendment, we believe that precedent-setting decisions such as this should be the result of a fact-driven discussion. Our primary concern with the proposed amendment is that it would prohibit the sale of a product that hasn't even been fully developed and is obviously misunderstood.

Adoption of this language will cause companies across numerous industries to question the state's commitment to innovation and scientific research and to ask this key question: "If a technology with significant potential is banned before scientists and researchers can learn and understand its opportunities and challenges, how will we ever find solutions for the problems of tomorrow?"

Since our founding in 1868, our company's culture has been rooted in a deeply American attribute: Innovation. We urge Connecticut legislators to delve more deeply into this issue and to understand the enormous environmental and economic potential of this innovation.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss this issue further and, hopefully, work together to find answers to some of the challenges we all face.