

Middletown Project Green Lawn



Chem-free Lawns

TESTIMONY

In Support of

H.B. No. 6897 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE APPLICATION OF PESTICIDES AT
STATE-OPERATED PARKS, ATHLETIC FIELDS AND PLAYGROUNDS

Committee on Children

March 3, 2015

Dear Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban and members of the Committee on Children,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of H.B. 6897 An Act Concerning the Application of Pesticides at State-Operated Parks, Athletic Fields and Playgrounds. This issue is vital to protecting the health of CT's children, and of great concern to our members.

Project Green Lawn is a Middletown-based public awareness campaign created to educate residents, businesses and institutions about the health and environmental risks of traditional lawn care chemicals and the benefits of organic lawn care. Members include children's advocates, environmental groups, members of the City's Recycling Commission and Conservation Commission and public health professionals. Project Green Lawn has hosted a variety of public education events since 2005 and has worked closely with the City to improve organic lawn care efforts on municipal grounds.

HB 6897 is an important and necessary additional step forward to protect the health of all children in Connecticut. Currently, state law does not allow lawn care pesticides on school grounds K-8. This bill will extend restrictions on use of these toxic chemicals to a variety of state-owned public outdoor areas, where our children and others can still be involuntarily exposed despite the known health risks.

There are compelling reasons not to allow lawn care pesticides on public grounds. Numerous studies have linked the 30 commonly used lawn pesticides with serious health effects, including 19 studies linking these pesticides with cancer, 13 with birth defects, 21 with reproductive effects, and 15 with neurotoxicity or abnormal brain development. Other studies have linked these pesticides with hyperactivity, developmental delays, behavioral disorders and motor dysfunction. Children are particularly vulnerable due to their rapidly developing bodies. When pesticides are applied, children can be exposed when they walk on or play in the grass. The pesticides can also be tracked in schools and in homes, where they can persist for long periods of time, exposing children and their family members even if they were not in contact with the grass.

Given the overwhelming evidence, why would we put our children's health at risk for cosmetic reasons?

There are safe, effective and affordable alternatives to these toxic pesticides for both grounds and fields. Lawns and fields can be maintained to the highest of standards without the use of dangerous chemicals. It may be a different way of doing business for typical municipal grounds employees and landscapers and require retraining, but safe, proven methods do exist and many municipalities have made the switch successfully, including Branford and Cheshire. Our friends in New York have a state law that bans lawn care pesticides on all schools, providing numerous examples of beautiful turfs maintained organically.

Considering there are so many unknowns and so much plausible evidence about the dangers of these chemicals, it seems unconscionable to continue to expose our children to these risks. CT made the important step of protecting its younger school children from exposure at their schools, but now it is time to extend restrictions on application of toxic lawn care chemicals to other public places where children play.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Should you have any questions, please contact Project Green Lawn staff, Kim O'Rourke, Middletown's Recycling Coordinator, at 860-638-4855 or kim.orourke@MiddletownCT.Gov.