

Written Testimony
Mike Wallace, President
Connecticut Environmental Council
House Bill 6897, Act Concerning the Application of Pesticides at State-Operated Parks, Athletic Fields and Playgrounds
Tuesday, March 3, 2015
Committee on Children

Good day Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban, Senator Martin, Representative Kokoruda and the distinguished members of the Committee on Children, my name is Mike Wallace, I am the President of the Connecticut Environmental Council (CTEC). I appreciate this opportunity to offer my comments in opposition to House Bill 6897, Act Concerning the Application of Pesticides at State-Operated Parks, Athletic Fields and Playgrounds.

CTEC is a membership organization representing associations and professionals. Our membership includes the Connecticut Groundskeepers Association, the Connecticut Tree Protective Association, the Connecticut Pest Control Association, the Connecticut Irrigation Contractors Association, and the Connecticut Association of Golf Course Superintendents.

During the 2005 session, CTEC supported legislation that permitted pest controls to be applied to public and private schools 8th grade or under if the applications adhered to an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plan. In addition, the schools IPM plan must be consistent with DEEP's Model Pest Control Management Plan. From January 1, 2006 until the July 1, 2010 sunset, school grounds were well maintained using the best management practices of IPM.

State law defines IPM as "the judicious use of pesticides to maintain a pest population at or below an acceptable level, while decreasing the use of pesticides." As a result of IPM's judicious methods of applying lawn care pesticides, over the four years of the pilot program tons of active ingredients were withheld from use on school grounds. During the pilot, the IPM approach was proven to be safe, reliable and an effective way of applying lawn care pesticides, while protecting the financial investment towns have made in athletic fields and school grounds.

Since the July 1, 2010 sunset athletic fields and school grounds have fallen into disrepair with pest populations growing out of control making athletic fields unplayable due to hard and uneven playing surfaces and infestations of insects, both stinging and turf damaging. Healthy turf creates a cushion preventing injury to children playing on the surface.

The ban has left our members, the licensed, educated professionals that take care of school grounds, without the proper tools to maintain healthy playing surfaces for our children. This legislation does not allow for the control of pests by the professional application of prescriptive, least toxic and most effective EPA registered pest controls. This legislation has the potential to extend the damage to even more municipal spaces, further letting our playing fields deteriorate and pests such as poison ivy and invasive species affect the ability to fully utilize and enjoy our municipal lands.

CTEC, as well as over twenty municipal organizations responsible for the care of school grounds, recommend a balanced science based approach to ensure that our communities have safe and pest free parks, playgrounds, athletic fields and municipal greens. The current Kto8 ban simply does not work and certainly should not be expanded to include high schools and other municipal or state fields and parks. We respectfully request that you not move forward with this proposal.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide you with this testimony.