



Environment Committee

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Testimony

By

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Members of the Environment Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding SB 366, *An Act Extending the Ban on the Use of Lawn Care Pesticides to Schools that House Grades Nine to Twelve, Inclusive and to State Facilities*. I am the Director of Environmental Policy for the University of Connecticut. As the state's land and sea grant public research university, UConn is committed to environmental stewardship, sustainability and responsible growth. We preserve and maintain thousands of acres of forest and farmland in the state as public open space. We also maintain hundreds of acres of lawn on our various campuses, such as the Great Lawn at our main campus in Storrs, along with many natural turf athletic fields for intramural, club and varsity sports practices and competitions, and several research parcels dedicated to plant science and turfgrass management research.

SB 366 proposes that "No person shall apply a lawn care pesticide on the grounds of any property that is under the custody, control or care of any state agency, except an emergency application of pesticide may be made to eliminate an immediate threat to human health...."

The UConn Storrs campus, its regional campuses throughout the state, UConn Law School and the Health Center are state agencies as defined by this bill and would all be covered by this prohibition. UConn opposes this ban because our turf management and landscaping practices, such as integrated pest management (IPM), have proven to be protective of the environment and water quality without jeopardizing public health and safety. The proposed restriction on use of lawn care pesticides on state grounds is an unnecessary limitation on what UConn can do, in a safe and cost effective manner, to properly maintain its athletic fields, campus grounds, and turf-related research programs.

The ban is unnecessary because UConn adheres to IPM techniques on its athletic fields and campus grounds, resulting in minimal use of pesticides. For example, more than 90% of the 350 acres of lawn at the main campus are maintained without the use of pesticides. There are no blanket applications of pesticides made to campus grounds, and applications are never made near open waterways. No applications are performed without pre-approval from the authorized UConn manager, who carefully considers upcoming weather conditions before allowing pesticide use. All applications are done by licensed commercial applicators, and all areas treated are posted for the required time.

Further, UConn is a national leader in deploying Low Impact Development (LID) and Green Infrastructure features, such as rain gardens, bio-retention basins, green roofs and porous paving materials, which further protect water quality and prevent runoff from reaching lakes, rivers and streams on or near our campuses. At the Storrs

campus, nearly 175,000 square feet of surface area has effectively been disconnected from local waterways through the installation of these LID features, resulting in more than 41 million gallons of runoff infiltrated on-site and prevented from discharging to ponds and streams.

IPM contemplates the careful use of insect and invasive weed deterrents, as necessary to respond to an active infestation. This protects the integrity of lawns and playing fields and ensures the safety of student athletes and recreational field users. The organic alternatives deemed permissible under the proposed bill, which, when applied incorrectly, can pose as much of a risk to public health as those pesticides that would be banned by SB 366, are often more expensive and less effective. UConn uses only pesticides that are approved by EPA and DEEP and applied by licensed applicators. When pesticides are less effective or banned from use, it would result in the need to re-seed more often to prevent soil compaction, muddy conditions, player injuries, and sediment erosion. In addition to the increased safety risks, extra re-seedings would result in significant additional labor and material costs.

Finally, if enacted, the bill would prevent important educational and sponsored plant science research projects of UConn's College of Agriculture, Health & Natural Resources. For example, carefully applied, managed and studied pesticide use is an essential element of the Turfgrass Management degree program. Hands-on experience with all turf management techniques is essential to undergraduates enrolled in this degree program. Students graduating from this program have an exceptionally high job placement rate.

Annually, UConn faculty conduct numerous funded research projects related to turfgrass management. This research ranges from organic turf management to highly managed turf such as golf courses. A major research initiative is underway to develop alternative management systems for public schools in response to previous legislation banning pesticide use on school grounds and athletic fields. Published research at UConn and elsewhere have demonstrated that alternative management strategies are more costly and less efficacious than conventional turf management systems. Several peer reviewed publications related to this issue have been appended to this document as reference.

Instead of SB 366, UConn would support recommendations to:

1. Utilize the legislatively created Pesticide Advisory Council to review all new pesticides on a continuing basis for safety and effectiveness and report their findings to the Commissioner of DEEP for consideration.
2. Authorize DEEP, in consultation with the Pesticide Advisory Council, to develop and disseminate best practices to assist in guiding the regulated community regarding these issues.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.