



March 9, 2015

RE: Support for parts of Bills 366 and 1063

Dear Senator Kennedy, Representative Albis and members of the Environment Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on these important bills which would both protect high school students from the toxic effects of pesticides at their schools. I have two grandchildren in high school and will have three there next year, so this is personal.

However today I am testifying on behalf of the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Connecticut (CT NOFA) **in support of including high school students among the beneficiaries of Connecticut's pioneering and important ban on applying pesticides on school properties.**

CT NOFA is a membership organization of about 800 farmers, gardeners, land care professionals, chefs, scientists, teachers and consumers who see great benefits in increasing our production and consumption of local and organic food. We were formed with that mission in 1982. (See ctnofa.org.)

Since 1990, CT NOFA has also been educating and advocating for organic care of the landscape. In 2000 the NOFA Organic Land Care Program created and published the first *Standards for Organic Land Care* which are now internationally recognized. (See organiclandcare.net.)

Organic Land Care means caring for the landscape without using toxic pesticides or chemical fertilizers and much more. Building healthy, carbon-rich soil, using native plants and encouraging beneficial insects, birds and other animals are all part of this way of working.

Managing the landscape organically has important benefits for workers who aren't exposed to toxic pesticides, for our water which is not polluted with chemical fertilizer runoff and for pollinators, birds and other wildlife which don't encounter poisons when they visit, eat and nest.

In today's context, the big beneficiaries are our high school age students who are not exposed to pesticides in school during the time when their bodies are changing rapidly and the endocrine-disrupting nature of many pesticides can cause serious health damage.

Over the 15 years since the NOFA *Standards* were developed, we have educated thousands of professionals from all over the country in organic land care. In just that last three years, 107 Connecticut residents took the NOFA Organic Lawn Care Certificate Course preparing them to provide organic lawn care services in this state. This course was developed with funds from The Long Island Sound Future Fund. Students traveled from ten states to attend this course because this information is desirable and our great state, with Massachusetts, leads the nation in organic land care practices and training.

In just the last four years 100 state residents took the 30-hour NOFA Accreditation Course in Organic Land Care which provides the foundation for organic management of properties, including turf. Currently 135 of Connecticut professional landscapers maintain their Organic Land Care Accreditation and provide organic land care services to CT residents and businesses.

Working with Three Rivers Community College in Norwich, CT we are offering the Online Organic Lawn Care Certificate Course for a low fee of \$150, making 10 hours of training accessible to all at a low price.

Now to the bills under consideration.

The Northeast Organic Farming Association of Connecticut
A growing community of organic farmers, gardeners, land care professionals and consumers
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We enthusiastically support the intent to greatly limit the toxic pesticides applied in our state. It makes sense to start this with the schools in order to protect the next generation.

In 366, Section 3, (a) (4) and 1063, Section 4, (a) (4) it might work well to reference OMRI certification for allowed pesticides. The Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI) seal indicates that a material is suitable for use on organic farms according to the National Organic Program Standards.

We welcome the allowance for use of microbial and biochemical pesticides, horticultural soaps and oils and exempt materials. This is similar to the pesticide products that are allowed by the NOFA Standards. However, we emphasize organic soil management and supporting environmental health as the most important pest control strategies.

The big question today is where should these prohibitions apply. It would be great if they applied all over the state. However the "grounds of any state agency" included in Bill 366 will have enormous implications especially in coming into effect in just a matter of months. We applaud the idea. We think it needs more thought and likely phase in to really work. Start with the largest applications-perhaps herbicides on the roadsides.

The athletic fields and municipal greens included in Bill 1063 make more sense as starting places. Why should towns spend money to poison their green centers.

Section 5 of Bill 1063 has a number of good ideas, especially proper disposal, public education and monitoring. These are all worthwhile and ideally would be funded by a tax on pesticides. We worry about the reestablishment of the Pesticide Advisory Council as currently described. It seems likely to be ineffective and by its makeup, biased toward the use of pesticides, although the charge to expand prohibitions and protect pollinator habitat are very important.

Thanks for this opportunity to testify.

If you have any questions, please contact me at bduensing@mac.com or at (203) 231-1790.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Duesing". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline.

Bill Duesing
Organic Advocate
CT NOFA