

# The Watershed Partnership, Inc.

Monday, March 11, 2015

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From Jerry Silbert, M.D. in qualified support of SB-1063 (with revisions).

Honorable members of the Committee:

Bill 1063 provides more products that can be used for control of grubs and other insects. I have suggested revisions (attached) that makes this even stronger and more practical.

Bill 1063 also extends the lawn pesticide ban to municipal parks, playgrounds, athletic fields, and town greens. This is good and will provide even more protection to the most vulnerable people. But this section also requires revisions to make it practical. Perhaps I am not interpreting the bill correctly, but it seems to do away with IPM at schools altogether. If so, this is grave mistake. ALL schools public and private should have an IPM plan for the application of toxic pesticides in areas not subject to the lawn pesticide ban. I have suggested revisions that accomplish this objective. I hope you will consider them.

The evidence is clear. Lawn pesticides can harm children. This conclusion is found in numerous peer reviewed scientific studies. A recent review of the scientific literature by the American Academy of Pediatrics emphasized this fact. The principle authors of this review commended Connecticut's school pesticide ban as more protective of children than the "Integrated Pest Management" (IPM) that is advocated by the ban's opponents (See attached fact sheet with references).

Dr. Philip Landrigan, an internationally recognized expert on the environment and children's health, has praised Connecticut for it's policy on protecting children from toxic lawn pesticides. Dr. Landrigan said, "I am particularly concerned by the suggestion that the existing very highly protective pesticide law be replaced with newer, weaker legislation that is less highly protective of children's health under the rubric of "Integrated Pest Management" or "IPM..." (attached).

What the Connecticut legislature has done to protect children in grades K-8 schools should be applied equally to municipal parks, playgrounds, town greens and athletic fields that children and pregnant women frequent.

Children and the child *in utero* are particularly vulnerable to toxins such as lawn pesticides. Children eat more food, drink more fluids, breath more air and have more skin area per pound of body weight than adults. Children cannot defend against toxic chemicals as well as adults.

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The child *in utero* is exquisitely sensitive to toxic chemicals and endocrine disrupters that can cause irreversible harm to the development of the brain and other organs.

In the medical profession there is an important principle – First do no harm. It is a moral duty to prevent harm to children from these toxic chemicals.

What stands in the way of doing what is so obviously right?

You may hear testimony from opponents of this bill saying that without toxic pesticides it is not possible and too costly to maintain safe, playable athletic fields. **THIS IS SIMPLY NOT TRUE.**

There are many school fields in CT and NY that are not using toxic lawn pesticides. They look fine and are perfectly playable. The reason some fields do not do well is because of lack of knowledge or lack of motivation or both. With the right knowledge and the right motivation, perfectly playable fields are definitely possible. I have included with my testimony photographs of eight playing fields I am personally familiar with, that have been maintained without toxic lawn pesticides for many years. They are pesticide free and perfectly playable

Is non-toxic care too costly? It is not. Actually, it can be less costly than conventional care using toxic pesticides once the health and productivity of the soil is restored. (see attached cost studies)

But ultimately, this is not about grass. This is about children with cancer. This is about children with leukemia. This is about children with birth defects, This is about children with learning disabilities.

I must add that I do NOT support section 5 of 1063. The constitution of the Pesticide Advisory Committee is slanted toward institutions that support the use of pesticides. They do research on pesticides, They teach how to use pesticides, and some get money from the pesticide industry to support their research. The result promoting the use of toxic pesticides is a foregone conclusion. Balance on this Committee could be found with members knowledgeable about how NOT to use toxic pesticides and achieve desired results. Moving in this nontoxic direction would be much more protective of human health and the health of the environment on which we depend for our very lives.

Honorable members of the Committee, you did the right thing to consider this bill and you will do the right thing if you vote for it WITH THE NECESSARY REVISIONS. You may never know the children you are protecting from harm, but rest assured, your vote can save lives and preventing the suffering of many of Connecticut's children and their families.

Respectfully,

*Jerry Silbert, M.D.*