

Middletown Project Green Lawn



Chem-free Lawns

TESTIMONY in SUPPORT

Committee Bill No. 366 (RAISED) ***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.***

and

Senate Bill No. 1063 ***AN ACT CONCERNING THE APPLICATION OF PESTICIDES ON SCHOOL GROUNDS AND CERTAIN PUBLIC SPACES, AUTHORIZING THE USE OF CERTAIN MICROBIALS AND REESTABLISHING THE PESTICIDE ADVISORY COUNCIL.***

Environment Committee

March 10, 2015

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony concerning Committee Bill 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*, and SB 1063, *An Act Concerning the Application of Pesticides on School Grounds and Certain Public Spaces, Authorizing the Use of Certain Microbials, and Reestablishing the Pesticide Advisory Council*. Issues addressed by these bills are 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.

We support the spirit of both of these bills and feel that extending restrictions on use of lawn care chemicals to all schools through high school and other places where children play 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 high schools and other state facilities where children play. Why should we not be protecting all of our school-age children, and not just at their schools? We believe the focus of any efforts to restrict use of lawn care pesticides should be on our most vulnerable population, our children.

However, we are concerned about inclusion of a Pesticide Advisory Council as proposed in Bill 1063. If reconvened, the Pesticide Advisory Council needs to be fair and balanced, representing all interests.

There are compelling reasons to not allow lawn care pesticides on all school grounds and other places where children play. 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 high schools and other 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.