

State of Connecticut
Environment Committee
Written Testimony opposing SB443
March 10, 2015

I am submitting written testimony in opposition to the Environmental Committee's bills on pesticide use (SB00366 and SB01063). I am testifying as a father of an eight-year-old athlete from Newington, CT. I also possess a Supervisory Pesticide Applicator's license from the CT DEEP.

Environmental groups often use emotion-based arguments to further their anti-pesticide agenda rather than relying on scientific research to portray the truth about the risks and benefits associated with responsible pesticide use. I watched many proponents of similar legislation testify before this committee on March 17, 2014, showing photographs of children that died of cancer, but failed to connect their illness to exposure to pesticides that occurred on public ball fields or grounds. While the death or illness of any child heartbreaking, I find it appalling that people would use these tragedies to further their personal agendas.

The proposed changes to the current regulations will increase the risk of injury to our minors. It is my opinion that far more children are injured while playing sports on poorly maintained fields than die of cancer from exposure to chemicals applied to the turf. Deteriorating conditions of athletic facilities contribute to joint injuries as turf resiliency declines under excessive wear due to multi-season use. Decreased turf density and diminished root systems will result in compacted soils which increase the risk of concussion. Lack of access to insecticides will increase risk of allergic reaction to stings from burrowing venomous insects, and poisonous and invasive vegetation left unchecked will consume our athletic fields and facilities due to loss of effective herbicides. Responsible management programs could be developed utilizing these control products at times when school is out of session or during periods when the fields are not being used. Deteriorating athletic facilities will lead to decline in participation in athletic programs, which provide health benefits, as well as valuable life lessons for our children.

A cooperative effort is required to preserve the quality of our recreational facilities and minimize the potential risk of exposure to the public and the environment. The proper approach is to rely on the knowledge and experience of professionals from DEEP, DPH, and the University of Connecticut to determine the best way to utilize Best Management Practices, Integrated Pest Management, and the Best Available Technology to minimize all risks to our children, community, and the environment.

IPM protocols, which were developed as part of a cooperative effort, are already in place to reduce the use and reliance on pesticides, thereby reducing the risk to children. The established IPM guidelines already require facilities to implement sound fertility and cultural programs as the foundation for maintaining healthy turf environments, and provide detailed information on how and when control products can be applied based on measureable thresholds of pest infestation. Banning all chemical control products also prohibits the use of reduced risk and least toxic alternatives that have recently been labeled by the United States Environmental Protection Agency.

Risk associated with pest control products involves both the toxicity of the material and the nature and extent of the exposure. While the EPA requires manufacturers provide extensive data

on the toxicity of their products for various routes of exposure, very little information exists to identify the level of exposure under real world situations. Research is required to determine the nature and gravity of the actual risk based on the measured exposures to applications made under current IPM guidelines, combined with the intrinsic toxicological characteristics of reduced risk pesticides and the best available technology. Similar research has been conducted to determine exposure for other activities and have produced measurable results in real world situations. This is the kind of science based information that leads to effective legislation that protects the public and preserves their interests.

I ask that the members of the environment committee work with professionals from the Department of Public Health and the University of Connecticut - Department of Plant Science to find answers to the following questions;

1. How effective are the existing IPM protocols that are currently mandated for school grounds?
2. What is the actual level of exposure under real world situations on fields being managed under the current guidelines?
3. Is it possible to reduce the risk even further by identifying and mandating the use of Best Management Practices and Best Available Technology?

Banning responsible use of control products without having detailed information regarding the risks associated with exposure is no different than lending support to a bill before you have read it.

Respectfully submitted,
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