

Connecticut Bans Toxic Lawn Pesticides in Municipal Playgrounds Statewide

By [Beyond Pesticides](#)

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The Connecticut General Assembly last week passed legislation banning toxic lawn pesticides on municipal playgrounds, effective October 1, 2015. In the omnibus budget implementation [Bill 1502](#) at Section 448 (p.563 at line 17579). The bill also improves the existing parents' pesticide notification system by requiring school districts to provide at least 24-hour electronic notification any time a pesticide application is schedule to occur on school property (Secs. 445 and 446), as well as requiring and tracking the use of pesticides and integrated pest management (IPM) methods to reduce pesticide use on state properties (Sec. 449).

"As we have recognized for many years in Connecticut, children are particularly endangered by pesticides - because these chemicals accumulate in kids' growing bodies faster than for



the rest of us,"

said Rep. Andrew Fleischmann, House Chairman of the Education Committee, which drafted the 2005 and 2009 laws prohibiting pesticide use on school fields. "This measure represents a great step forward for our state, safeguarding our children from these toxic chemicals on town playgrounds - and ensuring that parents get notice when pesticides are used at public schools," he added.

"Time and time again pesticides have been shown to have serious health and environmental consequences, and it is critical that we begin limiting their use," said State Senator Ted Kennedy, Jr., Chair of the Senate Environment Committee. "By keeping pesticides off of playgrounds and school property, we limit [children's] exposure to those who are most likely to become ill as a result of them. Improving our state's notification procedures will better inform parents about pesticide and herbicide applications at their children's schools."

The bill bans lawn pesticides which are defined as "a pesticide registered by the United States Environmental Protection Agency and labeled pursuant to the federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act for use in lawn, garden and ornamental sites or areas. "Lawn care pesticide" does not include (A) a microbial pesticide or biochemical pesticide that is

registered with the United States Environmental Protection Agency, (B) a horticultural soap or oil that is registered with the United States Environmental Protection Agency and does not contain any synthetic pesticide or synergist, or (C) a pesticide classified by the United States Environmental Protection Agency as an exempt material pursuant to 40 CFR 152.25, as amended from time to time.”

In 2005, Connecticut became the first state in the nation to prohibit the use of lawn care pesticides on school athletic fields serving grades K-6 schools and daycare centers. The original law was expanded in 2009 to include middle school fields (Grades 7 and 8). Activists and concerned parents have been working for years in Connecticut to extend the current prohibition of pesticide use to include high schools, athletic fields, municipal parks and town land, but [to no avail](#). Strong opposition from many municipalities and the pesticide industry has prevented the inclusion of language that would extend the ban to high school grounds and fields, despite calls from parents and local activists.

Other previous attempts to extend the ban have also fallen short over the years. In 2013, the then-proposed Bill 6385 to extend a pesticide ban from pre-K through eighth grade to include high schools stalled and a task force to study pesticides was set up, despite a favorable vote in the education committee to move the bill along. Another bill to extend the ban, which also [included a ban on the use of genetically engineered \(GE\) lawn and turf seed](#), passed the Senate last year, but was eventually stalled in the House. There have even been attempts to repeal the existing ban for daycare centers and K-8 schools, with legislation allowing pesticide use as part of a weak “integrated pest management” (IPM) system. [Current state law](#), adopted in 2005 and amended in [2007](#) and [2009](#) to cover facilities from day care centers up through grade 8, prohibits pesticides on playgrounds and playing fields at schools (except under emergency situations), allowing instead for non-toxic pest and fertility management.

Industry groups and local land managers advance the myth that banning pesticides from fields would cost schools and municipalities more money because of pest damage and could make playing fields hazardous. However, these myths have been debunked by studies and real world successes of organically managed fields. First, fields that are intensively managed with chemicals are at greater risk for disease and weed infestation (leading to a dependence on chemical inputs), compared with those whose practices build healthy, balanced soil. Similarly, chemically-managed fields are generally harder and more compacted due to a loss of natural soil biology, while organic management focuses on cultural practices, such as aeration, that alleviates compaction and provides a softer, better playing surface. Any field with irregular surfaces, whether organically managed or not, can lead to falls or twisted ankles. Banning pesticides from playing fields also will not cost more in the long-term. While initial costs to transition a chemical-dependent field to organic care can be higher, in the long-run costs will be lower as inputs, like fertilizer and water, decrease, along with the absence of the cost of annual chemical treatments. Read the factsheet: [Pesticides and Playing Fields](#).

The need for legislation to protect vulnerable children from the hazards of toxic pesticides is clear. Studies show that pesticides are associated with several human health risks including cancer, learning/behavioral disabilities and reproductive and sexual dysfunction. The [Pesticide-Induced Disease Database](#) documents the association between pesticide exposures and the onset of disease. This is supported by the [findings of the American Academy of Pediatrics](#), which concluded in December 2012 that, “Children encounter

pesticides daily and have unique susceptibilities to their potential toxicity.” The report went on to discuss how kids are exposed to pesticides every day in air, food, dust, and soil. Children also frequently come into contact with pesticide residue on pets and after lawn, garden, or household pesticide applications.

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