

# SUPPORT

## LD 837: “An Act to Protect Children’s Health and Promote Safe Schools and Day Care Centers by Limiting the Use of Pesticides”

**Sponsor:** Representative NELSON of Falmouth

**Summary:** This bill would replace herbicides - that are used for cosmetic or ornamental purposes - on school grounds and day care centers with nontoxic alternatives.

### **Explanation<sup>1</sup>:**

#### **Children are at higher risk from lawn chemicals**

- Children face higher risks than adults from lawn chemical exposure due to their small size, engaging in activities on or near the ground, tendency to place their hands close to their face, greater intake of air relative to body weight, and developing organ systems<sup>2</sup>
- Children ages 6-11 nationwide have significantly higher levels of pesticide residues in their bodies than all other age categories.<sup>3</sup>
- The National Academy of Sciences reports that children are more susceptible to chemicals than adults and estimates that 50% of lifetime pesticide exposure occurs during the first five years of life.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Cosmetic lawn chemicals are linked to learning disabilities and other serious health effects**

- Of the 36 most commonly used lawn pesticides: 14 are probable or possible carcinogens, 15 are linked with birth defects, 21 with reproductive effects, 24 with neurotoxicity, 22 with liver or kidney damage, and 34 are sensitizers and/or irritants.<sup>5</sup>
- Studies on lawn product formulations show effects on learning ability, aggressiveness, memory, motor skills and immune system function.<sup>6</sup>
- Lawn products containing herbicides and fertilizers (such as “weed and feed” products) tested on mice show increased risk of infertility, miscarriage and birth defects at very low dosages.

#### **Lawn chemicals can easily be replaced with alternative lawn care**

- Several Maine towns have passed policies restricting lawn chemicals on municipal properties with alternative lawn care methods, including Camden, Ogunquit, and Brunswick.
- The states of Connecticut and New York recently passed laws restricting pesticide use on school grounds.
- Alternative lawn care methods for school athletic fields have been shown to yield savings after three to four years, when compared with chemically-intensive lawn care methods.<sup>7</sup>

**NRCM supports the Safe School Grounds Bill to make schools safe and healthy environments where children can learn and grow.**

<sup>1</sup> Explanation section used by permission from the Alliance for a Clean and Healthy Maine – [www.cleanandhealthyme.org](http://www.cleanandhealthyme.org)

<sup>2</sup> US EPA, Office of the Administrator, Environmental Health Threats to Children, EPA 175-F-96-001, September 1996.

<sup>3</sup> National Research Council, National Academy of Science. 1993. Pesticides in the Diets of Infants and Children, National Academy Press, Washington, DC. 184-185.

<sup>4</sup> National Research Council, National Academy of Science. 1993. Pesticides in the Diets of Infants and Children, National Academy Press, Washington, DC. 184-185.

<sup>5</sup> Beyond Pesticides, Health Effects of 36 Commonly Used Lawn Pesticides, updated 2002.

<sup>6</sup> Porter, W. 2004 Spring. “Do Pesticides Affect Learning and Behavior? The neuro-endocrine-immune connection,” Pesticides and You, Beyond Pesticides 21(4): 11-15; Sheler, T., et al. 2000. “Known and suspected developmental neurotoxicants,” In Harms Way: Toxic Threats to Child Development, Greater Boston Physicians for Social Responsibility: Cambridge, MA; Mitchell, J. et al. 1989. “The Behavioral Effects of Pesticides in Male Mice,” Neurotoxicology and Teratology 11: 45-50.

<sup>7</sup> “A Cost Comparison of Conventional (Chemical) Turf Management and Natural (Organic) Turf Management for School Athletic Fields”. By Charles Osborne and Doug Wood, Grassroots Environmental Education. March 2010.