

Senator Anne Gobi
Representative Smitty Pignatelli
Joint Committee on Environment,
Natural Resources and Agriculture
Massachusetts State House, Rooms 513/473F
Boston, MA 02133

Sarah Little, Ph.D.
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October 16, 2017

Dear Chairman Gobi and Chairman Pignatelli,

I am writing to you in support of House bill 3927 relative to the powers of cities and town to regulate, restrict or prohibit the use, application or disposal of certain pesticides.

Pesticides are harmful. In Chapter 85 of the Acts of 2000, An Act Protecting Children And Families From Harmful Pesticides (CFPA), the both the MA House and Senate unanimously voted in support of the statement, "Pesticides contain toxic substances, many of which may have a detrimental effect on human health and the environment and, in particular, have developmental effects on children."

Pesticides are overused. Each year, pesticide applicators, not including agriculture, release roughly 6 million lbs¹ of pesticide product into Massachusetts. Despite all the current pesticide laws and regulations in this state, our citizens and environment are chronically exposed to hundreds of toxic landscaping chemicals in the air we breathe, the water we drink or in which we swim, and on turf where we play.

Pesticides are mostly unnecessary. The use of pesticides in landscaping is primarily aesthetic. Municipalities are learning² that Organic Integrated Pest Management (Organic IPM) techniques, practiced by hundreds of Massachusetts landscaping companies, produce the same or better results. These methods are a safer alternative to the synthetic chemicals used for nuisance pest control and landscape management.

State regulations are insufficient. Some municipalities are more sensitive to pollutants. Wellesley pumps its drinking water from our subsurface aquifer, but we cannot regulate pesticide use on our land to protect it. Wellesley school children are protected by the CFPA from pesticides at school where aesthetic use of pesticides is not allowed, but the town is prevented by the current preemption from applying these same protections for them on sports fields, private parks, businesses, malls, condos or at home. In 2003 we adopted an Organic IPM policy³ covering town-owned land, but most of Wellesley remains unprotected.

Town regulations are not confusing. Ten Massachusetts towns have already restricted pesticide use by adopting safer landscaping practices and passing pesticide policies applicable to town-owned land⁴. Organic IPM methods based on written standards⁵ and used by accredited landscapers⁶ in MA are fully compatible with these policies. Practitioners who use these best management techniques successfully work in these towns.

Towns have specific needs for health, safety and environmental protection. Please support town's rights to regulate pesticides more strictly than the State. Thank you for your consideration on this matter.

Sincerely,
Sarah Little, Ph.D.

cc:

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1. Pesticide use data, obtained electronically in 2000 from the MA Pesticide Program. The Town of Wellesley was unable to obtain electronic information from the MA Pesticide Program on how much pesticide product was applied in the state or to our town land in 2016, although the CFPFA requires that the public have readily available access to such data.
2. Toxics Use Reduction Institute, municipal pesticide use reduction projects, https://www.turi.org/Our_Work/Home_Community/Topic_Areas/Pesticides
3. Wellesley's Organic IPM policy:
http://wellesleyma.virtualltownhall.net/Pages/WellesleyMA_NRC/OrganicIntegratedPestManagementPolicy2016.pdf
4. Towns with IPM policies for town land: Marblehead, Wellesley, Newton, Ashland, Townsend, Wellfleet, Eastham, Swampscott, Westford, Springfield.
5. Northeast Organic Farming Association Standards for Organic Land Care, 2011, http://www.organiclandcare.net/sites/default/files/upload/standards2011_1.pdf
6. Northeast Organic Farming Association, Accredited Organic Land Care Professionals in MA, <http://nofa.organiclandcare.net/?s&category&location=275&a=true&paged=2>

Bio:

NOFA Organic Land Care Committee, 1999 – 2017
Toxics Use Reduction Act Advisory Committee, 2011-2015
Wellesley Natural Resources Commissioner, 2013
Town of Wellesley Pesticide Awareness Coordinator, 2000-2005

As the Town of Wellesley's pesticide awareness coordinator I worked with Wellesley Board of Health, Natural Resources Commission, the Toxics Use Reduction Institute, the Mass Dept. of Environmental Protection, the Northeastern Integrated Pest Management Center, the Northeast Organic Farming Association Organic Land Care Program, Newman's Own Foundation and others to educate hundreds of municipalities and businesses, as well as the general public, about pesticides and their alternatives. My pesticide reduction efforts for the town of Wellesley and neighboring towns received commendations from the MA House and Senate, as well as the MA Source Water Protection Program. This work led to the enactment of Town of Wellesley's Organic IPM policy and management plan, which now covers all town-owned lands in Wellesley.