



May 10th, 2023

Oral Testimony of Dr. Brita E. Lundberg, for Greater Boston Physicians for Social Responsibility
before the Joint Committee on Environment & Natural Resources

In support of:

- 1/ H.811 - "An Act Relative to improving pesticide protections for Massachusetts schoolchildren;
- 2/ "S.487/H.825 - "An Act relative to pesticides;" and
- 3/ S.521/H.783 - "An Act relative to the pesticide board"

Thank you, to the Chairs and Members of the Joint Committee for hearing my testimony.

I am Dr. Brita Lundberg, Chair of the Board at Greater Boston Physicians for Social Responsibility, testifying in support of H.811 *An Act relative to improving pesticide protections for Massachusetts schoolchildren*, H.825 and H.783 .

GBPSR is a group of nationally-recognized experts in public health, cancer epidemiology, occupational medicine, and environmental health. Through our reports, **In Harms Way** and the **Pediatric Environmental Toolkit**, GBPSR has played an important role in raising awareness among the medical community and the public to the threats to human health posed by petrochemical derived pesticides.

The scientific community has known for decades that pesticides pose risks to human health; thanks to the work of the National Academy of Sciences' Committee on Pesticides in the Diets of Infants and Children, we know that children are - uniquely vulnerable to pesticides - much more so than adults. The NASEM report outlined four principles that explain why -all of which are relevant to the above-referenced legislation:

1. **Children have greater exposure to toxic chemicals than adults and absorb more pesticides relative to their body weight**
2. **Their metabolic pathways are immature so they are [less able to metabolize and excrete harmful chemicals](#).**

3. **They are undergoing rapid growth and development.**

4. **And finally, Children have more time than adults to develop chronic diseases that may be triggered by harmful exposures.**

In 2012 the [American Academy of Pediatrics \(AAP\) called for](#) governments to reduce children's exposure to pesticides, writing that scientific evidence "demonstrates associations between early life exposure to pesticides and pediatric cancers, decreased cognitive function, and behavioral problems." Prenatal exposure is particularly harmful.

This is a concern in our state because many Massachusetts schools and child care centers allow the spraying of pesticides on outdoor grounds, including highly toxic glyphosate: cumulative exposure to glyphosate is strongly linked to risk of immunosuppression, endocrine disruption, and cancers in multiple organs. Yet this pesticides may be used on outdoor landscapes including schools "to maintain quality appearance" or under the guise of protecting student "safety."

This is also a deep equity issue: many petrochemical pesticides are heavily used and disposed of in urban and low income communities, an additional negative health burden on children who are already disproportionately exposed to air pollution, water pollution and soil pollution at levels well above the state average.

I salute the Massachusetts legislature for your leadership to safeguard children's health, promote social justice, and protect our common home by limiting pesticide use in Massachusetts and by updating the standards to protect schoolchildren from pesticides.

I urge you to support the above legislation, to protect the health of today's children and tomorrow's adults: decreasing these toxic exposures will increase their ability to contribute to society.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brita E. Lundberg". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Brita E. Lundberg, M.D., Chair of the Board,
Greater Boston Physicians for Social Responsibility

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