

Submitter: Kelly Ferguson
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure: SB426

Testimony in Support of SB 426

TO: Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Weber, and Committee Members
FROM: Kelly Ferguson
DATE: February 20, 2023
RE: Testimony to the Senate Education Committee on Toxics Free Schools SB 426

Dear Chair Dembrow and Committee Members,

My name is Kelly Ferguson and I am writing to urge you to support SB 426.

As a public school teacher, mother of two young children, and human who wishes to be provided a safe working environment, I believe it is of the utmost importance that our policy-makers prioritize minimizing exposure to harmful chemicals in schools, and therefore barriers to education. Pesticides used in and around school grounds have the potential of being significant obstacles to student engagement and well-being, as exposure to these harmful chemicals has been known to cause illnesses such as asthma, learning disabilities, and chronic illnesses.

I have seen first-hand how chronic illnesses such as asthma adversely affect some students in my high school classes' ability to successfully engage in school. Just this past month, I had two students miss school more than 3 days due to environmentally-triggered migraines and one student who has missed more than 5 days due to severe asthma. In the case of the student with asthma, she also has to abstain from going outside with our class entirely, due to the fact that she cannot and will not ever fully know the compounding effects of pollen and industrial pollutants that are known to be present in our area, let alone pesticides. For all these students, ONE day missed is a day too many. They would be well served if we could find a way to eliminate the background "noise" of toxins we knowingly place on our school grounds in the form of pesticides, that we might have a clearer view of other root causes of illness to them.

As a parent, I believe it is also my right to know what my children may have been exposed to within their school settings. At the very least, we need a more organized and accessible way of getting information to families regarding school IPM. Why have I, as a parent or teacher, never received messaging about the timing and nature of chemicals used on school grounds? Families are frequently using school grounds outside of official school hours for things like soccer practice and general play and

should know when to avoid them. The reason these basic prevention practices have not been implemented in a uniform way by schools is because we've never provided them with the funding or support to do so.

I support providing more resources for school districts to follow school pest management mandates and the formation of a diverse stakeholder group convened by ODE that INCLUDES educational institutions' seat at the table. It is critical to involve those of us in the educational field in planning and developing best management practices.

School children and teachers, parents and guardians need you, our elected representatives, to end 14 years of no funding. Please support SB 426 and properly allocate resources to schools to comply with laws and statutes related to safer chemical practices in our learning environments.

Sincerely,
Kelly Ferguson