



Feb 21, 2023

RE: SUPPORT for Senate Bill 426 Toxic Free Schools

Dear Chair Dembrow, Vice Chair Weber and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

The undersigned Oregon organizations strongly support Senate Bill 426 aimed at protecting children from pesticide exposures when they are at school. A key way to achieve this goal is to support the Department of Education and school districts to implement the least toxic alternatives within an effective integrated pest management plan.

Children are More Vulnerable to Pesticide Exposure: Even in small amounts, pesticide exposures put children at higher risk of adverse health effects. Children in historically disadvantaged communities of color, or those with parents who work with chemicals for their job, already bear the burden of increased exposure to harmful chemicals. Schools should be a toxic-free place that is safe for children to learn and play! Pesticides are associated with asthma, learning disabilities, chronic illnesses

Treat Pesticides Like Other Toxic Chemicals Found At Schools: Under the Healthy and Safe Schools Act, passed in 2017, school districts are required to report the presence of lead, asbestos and radon to the Department of Education and on their websites on a regular basis. Most school districts are doing a good job of testing and reporting lead, asbestos and radon, but not providing transparency pesticides. 86% of school districts have up-to-date Healthy and Safe Schools plans and annual reports on their websites, compared to only 39% of schools posting up-to-date school IPM plans on their websites (updated within the last 5 years). SB 426 will bring pesticide accountability up to par with other toxic chemicals covered in the Healthy and Safe Schools Act.

End an Unfunded Mandate! Oregon's School Districts have never received adequate resources to implement the requirements of the Oregon School Integrated Pest Management Law (2009) and the Healthy and Safe Schools Act (2017). Schools need help to meet these requirements in order to protect students' health. As recently as 2020, Oregon schools have been found out of compliance and, in some cases, incurred thousands of dollars in civil penalties or letters of violation for illegal pesticide applications, records violations and failure to notify prior to pesticide use. Schools don't need fines - they need support to deal with pesticides safely and legally!

Consistent Record Keeping: School districts need a simple and easy electronic record keeping system to ensure they have 4 years of complete pesticide application records, as required by law. Accuracy and transparency are reasonable goals. We must stop the unfair practices of charging parents thousands of dollars merely to get a paper copy of pesticide application records for their child's school district. SB 426 will use modern technology to create and store pesticide application records and make it easy, and more equitable, to properly notify parents, students and teachers of pesticide applications, as is required by law.

Complete Unfinished Business by including Key Stakeholders: The 2009 School IPM law failed to include Oregon Department of Education or children's health experts in the decision making process for using pesticides on school grounds. SB 426 makes sure that the agencies responsible for children's education and children's health are stakeholders and bring their expertise to the table. Stakeholders will meet 4x each year to guide the direction of school pest and pesticide management issues. Our schools cannot succeed without the support and input of the Department of Education.

We strongly urge you to vote for SB 426 to modernize, align and strengthen school integrated pest management within the Healthy and Safe Schools Act for the betterment of our children and our communities.