

Submitter: Benton Elliott
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure: SB426

I write in support of SB 426 and toxic free schools. 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, and chronic illnesses.

Under the Healthy and Safe Schools Act, passed in 2017, school districts are required to report the presence of lead, asbestos and radon - and pesticide use - to the Department of Education on a regular basis. Schools have been doing a good job of testing and reporting lead, asbestos and radon, but not pesticides. 86% of school districts have up-to-date Healthy and Safe Schools 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 since the Healthy and Safe Schools Act was adopted in 2017).

Oregon's School Districts have never received adequate resources to implement the requirements of the Oregon School Integrated Pest Management law and the Healthy and Safe Schools Act. 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. Schools don't need fines - they need support to deal with pesticides safely and legally.

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.

The 2009 School IPM law failed to include Oregon Department of Education or children's health experts. SB 426 makes sure that the agencies responsible for children's education and children's health are stakeholders in the decision making process for using pesticides on school grounds. Stakeholders will meet 4x each year to guide the direction of school pest and pesticide management issues. How can our

schools succeed without the support and input of the Department of Education?

Thank you for considering input from the community, including my own.