

RE: Testimony to the Senate Education Committee on Toxics Free Schools SB 426

Dear Chair Dembrow and Committee Members,

My name is Katie Jacobson and I am writing to urge you to support SB 426. I am a science teacher with 17 years of experience and I'm also the mother to three young children.

First speaking as a mother, I urge our State Legislature to take action to make sure that all schools are safe places for children to learn and play. My oldest son, Micah, is a curious eight-year-old with special needs (ADHD, Tourette's, and OCD) and my youngest son Kai, was diagnosed a year ago at 2 with kidney cancer. Both are doing well, but they are particularly sensitive to chemical exposure, including pesticides. While all children are particularly vulnerable to harm from even small exposures to toxic chemicals, children with health and learning challenges are at the greatest risk. Our educational institutions must be responsible for protecting children from dangerous chemicals on school grounds, no matter what their unique challenges.

Many public-school campuses also host Headstart and pre-school programs. Children younger than five years of age are exquisitely at risk from pesticide exposure because their organs and neurological systems are just starting to develop. We must not forget that these tiny children also share school campuses with older school children. They deserve the most precautionary approach to pesticide use on school grounds and in buildings. SB 426 calls for accurate pesticide record keeping, transparency and regular updates of IPM plans, which is what it takes to effectively protect children.

As a teacher, I am acutely aware of how many hours I spend on a school campus, including before and after school hours. According to the School IPM law, pesticides are not allowed to be sprayed when school children are onsite. The same caution is not true for teachers. Teachers may have their own vulnerabilities, including being pregnant or being a cancer survivor. A pregnant teacher must also be protected from pesticides. I am aware of studies that associate in-utero pesticide exposure with poor birth outcomes including preterm birth and low birth weight. Studies also point to an association between chronic, low-level exposures for mothers and negative effects on growth and neurobehavioral development of the developing fetus.

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, a step in the right direction to correct 14 years of lack of funding and the omission of educational institutions in the decision-making process. It is critical to involve those of us in the educational field in planning and developing best management practices.

I know from experience that Oregon schools currently lack the resources and support needed to successfully implement safer chemical 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.

Sincerely,

Katie Jacobson