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OREGONIANS FOR FOOD & SHELTER

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ofsonline.org; 503-370-8092

A non-profit coalition to promote the efficient production of quality food and fiber while protecting human health, personal property and the environment, through the integrated, responsible use of pest management products, soil nutrients and biotechnology.

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February 21st 2023
Senate Committee on Education
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon

Re: Opposition to SB 426 – Modifying Safe and Healthy Schools Plan/School IPM Program

Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Weber, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB 426. Oregonians for Food & Shelter is a broad and diverse coalition comprised of members across Oregon's natural resource sector, including many top agricultural commodity groups and the forest products industry. Our membership also includes professional pest management companies serving urban needs such as management of pests on school grounds. These members come together around the importance of pesticides, fertilizers, and biotechnology in managing pests for production, and protection of public health. We advocate for science-based policies impacting these tools, and we prioritize innovation and stewardship.

We want to first emphasize that OFS was a partner in the passing of the initial School IPM (integrated pest management) Bill in 2009, making Oregon one of the first states in the U.S. to implement a law specific to pesticide use in schools, with restrictions that exceed federal regulations. Since that time, OFS has advocated for the School IPM Program, and worked cooperatively to support state efforts to implement the program.

Through the initial legislation, Oregon State University (OSU) Extension service is responsible for developing model IPM plans for use in schools. **OSU's School IPM Program has conducted this work since, boasting many successes to date.** The Program currently serves over 580,000 children in K-12 Public schools, and several thousand more in federal Head Start programs. The Program typically trains more than 90% of Oregon school districts each year, with Oregon school districts now implementing IPM plans the Program has created. **Combined, the Program's education and outreach has led to a 60% reduction of pesticide use in and around schools.**

SB 426 proposes to shift responsibility for technical assistance on IPM plans away from OSU Extension Service to the Oregon Department of Education (ODE). This is concerning, **as ODE does not currently have a division of staff with**



technical expertise in IPM. This expertise has consistently been provided by OSU's School IPM Program. Further, the proposed advisory committee in SB 426 lacks the expertise to meet its listed functions, including updates to the "low-impact" pesticide list and making school IPM plan recommendations. **This work is already being conducted by trained experts at Oregon State University.**

To be clear, OFS values the health and safety of students, teachers, and families in school settings. When pesticides are used as labeled, public health protection is provided based on extensive risk assessments performed by the US EPA, a process which includes additional protections for children, pregnant women, and other sensitive populations.

Additionally, **pesticides in schools protect children from illness.** Asthma is currently the leading chronic childhood disease, with highest rates among low-income and minority populations. Cockroach and mouse allergens have been identified as a leading cause of this disease among children, and these allergens are commonly detected in classrooms. **Pests in schools pose significant risks to children.** And safe and effective management relies on very specific technical expertise. By divorcing implementation of this program from essential expertise on how to manage pests safely, **this bill would increase risks to children, not reduce them.**

OFS continues to want to be a partner in the School IPM Program and to ensure that schools have the information and resources they need to manage pests effectively and safely, and adhere to the law. While we would agree that the current School IPM Program is under resourced, we are not clear on the problems this bill is seeking to address, or why the solution would be to attempt to duplicate existing work but without trained expertise. **We ask you oppose SB 426, and instead, invest in the existing program.** Please know that at OFS, our door is always open to sit down and discuss needs, and identify strategies to meet them.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katie Murray". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Katie Murray

Executive Director

Oregonians for Food & Shelter

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