

February 19, 2025

**RE: Testimony in support of HB 2684 (Toxic Free Schools)**

Chair Neron, Vice-chairs Dobson and McIntire, and members of the committee:

My name is Arjorie Arberry-Baribeault and I am speaking in support of HB 2684.

When my children were in grade school their school's protocol for keeping the grounds free of weeds never occurred to me.

I noticed that the school grounds always looked nice and kept, but at what cost?

My priority was other ways to keep my children safe while not in my care. Everything from taking the drills in the event of a school shooting seriously. To speaking up if they see something wrong and to treat folks with respect.

I never thought that we needed to teach them about toxic chemicals being used on the school grounds.

There are currently no requirements for schools to review their pest management plans. HB 2684 would require those pest management plans be reviewed at least once every five years and made available to the public on a website. That seems so simple.

This will increase transparency and give parents, caregivers and students the opportunity to plan accordingly when it comes to being exposed to toxins.

As the mother of a childhood cancer survivor, the safety of her and her peers has made me very passionate about this bill. Many chemicals are known carcinogens. My Child returned to school after finishing 3 years of chemotherapy and she was very vulnerable to any chemical exposure because her systems were depleted by the chemo. The last thing I should have to worry about is potential exposure to pesticides at school while she was recovering. My child survived cancer. Whose child will be sacrificed next?

In fact, children have a higher risk of negative health impacts than adults because their organs are still maturing and developing.

Toxic Free Schools will help reduce our children's exposure to dangerous pesticides on athletic fields, playgrounds, cafeterias and learning spaces, and if passed, would include school gardens.

Our kids have enough to be concerned about when they are at school. Their studies. Friendship problems and cliques. Sports and extracurricular activities . Bullies and school shootings.

The burden of not being safe at school because of something avoidable should not be on them or us as parents.

I strongly urge the House Education Committee to support this bill and take necessary action to protect our children from continued exposure to harmful substances.

Thank you,

Arjorie Arberry-Baribeault

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