



ENVIRONMENTAL  
HEALTH  
STRATEGY CENTER

**Testimony in SUPPORT of LD 837,**

**An Act To Protect Children's Health and Promote Safe Schools and Child  
Care Centers by Limiting the Use of Pesticides**

**Before the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and  
Forestry**

**April 7, 2011**

Submitted by the Environmental Health Strategy Center

Dear Senator Sherman, Representative Edgecomb, and Members of the  
Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee:

This testimony is provided on behalf of the Environmental Health Strategy  
Center, a Maine-based environmental public health organization. EHSC  
promotes human health and safer chemicals in a sustainable economy. We  
believe that every person has a right to a clean and healthful environment  
wherever they live, work, learn or play. We envision a future that provides good  
green jobs, healthy communities, and social justice for all.

One of the core principles of the Environmental Health Strategy Center is the  
replacement of unnecessary, dangerous chemicals with safer alternatives, when  
such alternatives are available, effective, and affordable.

Our testimony is in SUPPORT of LD 837, an important and reasonable measure  
that would protect children's health by ensuring the use of safer alternative  
methods for pest and weed control on school grounds for cosmetic purposes,  
while still allowing the use of chemical pesticides when necessary for legitimate  
public health protection of students.

The use of synthetic chemical pesticides for purely cosmetic purposes in the very  
places where children congregate to learn is both unnecessary and harmful.

Children are not simply little adults. Their brains, organ systems, and immune  
systems are still developing and can be easily disrupted by toxic exposures.  
Children take in more air and food than adults, pound for pound. Children also

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spend more time on the floor and the ground, where synthetic chemical residue often settles (and where chemicals pesticides are often applied).

The Mount Sinai School of Medicine Children's Environmental Health Research and Disease Prevention Center was established in 1998 as an interdisciplinary Center to address the neurodevelopmental impacts of pesticides, lead and PCBs. Researchers at the Center identified three biological bases for the unique vulnerability of children to pesticide exposures: (1) children's metabolic pathways are immature compared to those of adults; (2) the delicate developmental processes of infants and children are easily disrupted; and (3) children have more years of life ahead of them in which to develop chronic diseases initiated by early exposures.<sup>1</sup>

The scientific literature linking pesticide exposures to adverse health impacts continues to grow. Pesticide exposure has been linked to cancers such as lymphoma,<sup>2</sup> and especially to life-long neurological health effects, particularly in cases of childhood exposure.

The Learning and Developmental Disabilities Initiative (LDDI) is a nonpartisan international partnership fostering collaboration among learning and developmental disability organizations, researchers, health professionals and environmental health groups to address concerns about the impact environmental pollutants may have on neurological health.

LDDI's Scientific Consensus Statement presents the current scientific understanding of links between environmental exposures and learning and developmental disabilities. The Scientific Consensus Statement reaches a strong conclusion about pesticides:

***Data from acute exposure incidents leave no doubt that some pesticides, particularly insecticides, are neurotoxic. There is now evidence that childhood exposure to pesticides, such as organophosphates, enhances the risk for developmental disorders including deficits in memory, poorer motor performance, and an array of other conditions.***<sup>3</sup>

The LDDI also produced a set of policy implications that flow from the Scientific Consensus Statement. Regarding pesticides, LDDI concludes that:

***"The cosmetic use of pesticides should be restricted and replaced with integrated pest management (IPM). IPM should become the standard for child care centers and schools."***<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Landrigan, P.J., L Claudio, SB Markowitz, et al. 1999. "Pesticides and inner city children: exposures, risks, and prevention." *Environmental Health Perspectives* 110:1081-1085.

<sup>2</sup> Osburn, S. 2001. Do Pesticides Cause Lymphoma? Lymphoma Foundation of America, Chevy Chase, MD; and Hardell, L. et al. 1999 Mar. "A Case-Control Study of Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma and Exposure to Pesticides," *J of the Am Cancer Soc*, (85):6. p. 1353.

<sup>3</sup> "Scientific Consensus Statement on Environmental Agents Associated with Neurodevelopmental Disorders," Learning and Developmental Disabilities Initiative, July 1, 2008, p 13.

<sup>4</sup> "Policy Implications Based on the Scientific Consensus Statement on Environmental Agents Associated with Neurodevelopmental Disorders," Learning and Developmental Disabilities Initiative, September 16, 2008, p 8.



LD 837 proposes a very wise and practical strategy to reduce children's exposure to dangerous and unnecessary chemical pesticides on school grounds. The bill:

- Covers only cosmetic pesticide uses;
- Enables the use of proven alternative integrated pest management (IPM) practices; and
- Allows the use of chemical pesticides for legitimate public health protection needs.

We ask the Committee to consider one simple question: **why would we expose our children to unnecessary chemicals known to harm brain development at the very places – their schools – we send them to learn, when safer alternatives are clearly available and effective?**

We encourage you to unanimously adopt LD 837 as written.

Attached References:

Scientific Consensus Statement on Environmental Agents Associated with Neurodevelopmental Disorders; Learning and Developmental Disabilities Initiative; July 1, 2008 (endorsed by 57 scientists, researchers, and health professionals).

“Pesticides and inner city children: exposures, risks, and prevention”; Environmental Health Perspectives 110:1081-1085; Landrigan, P.J., L Claudio, SB Markowitz, et al.