

# MASSPIRG

To: Chairwoman Rausch, Chairman Cahill and members of the Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

From: Deirdre Cummings, Legislative Director, MASSPIRG

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In support of a number of bills to protect public health, our wildlife, and the environment:

- S.516, H.813, Sen. Jason Lewis and Rep. Carmine Gentile *An Act Governing the use of pesticides containing the herbicide substance Glyphosate in the commonwealth*
- S. 517, Sen. Jason Lewis, *An Act relative to the use of glyphosate on public lands*
- S.487/H.825 Sen. Paul Feeney and Rep. James Hawkins, *An Act relative to pesticides*
- S.479, Sen. Jamie Eldridge, *An Act protecting pollinators by eliminating harmful products*
- S.520, H.843 Sen. Jason Lewis and Rep. Mary Keefe, *An Act to protect pollinator habitat*
- S.521/H.783 Sen. Jason Lewis and Rep. Mindy Domb, *An Act relative to the pesticide board*

MASSPIRG is a member-supported, statewide, non-partisan and non-profit public interest advocacy organization fighting for consumers for 50 years. We have a long history of working to protect public health and our environment including working to clean up state Superfund sites, restricting the use of pollinator harming pesticides, banning toxic flame retardants in children's products, mattresses, household furniture, carpeting and window coverings; and advocating for the removal of lead from gas, paint, and drinking water.

There are more than 80,000 chemicals on the market in the United States, used in everything from perfumes and household cleaners to fertilizers and industrial solvents. Yet most of them go directly into use without testing their impact on our health, our wildlife, or the long-term

consequences for the environment. Given what we know about the potential harm some chemicals can do, we shouldn't rush a chemical into widespread industrial or commercial use before we know for sure that it's safe. Certainly, we should stop using the ones we know or suspect are harmful. Further, the EPA estimated in 2012 that over 1 billion pounds of pesticides are applied annually in the US. According to the [Massachusetts Medical Society](#), "pesticides are important but insufficiently appreciated causes of disease, subclinical disability and premature death."

MASSPIRG is testifying in support of the listed bills above to restrict the use of the harmful pesticides Glyphosate and Noenicitinoids, to reduce the use of rodenticides and other pesticides through the promotion of integrated pest management, to modernize our pesticide reporting and tracking systems and to provide important oversight and review of the impacts of pesticide use in the environment and our health.

### **Reducing the use of and exposure to Glyphosate, S.517, S.516, H.813**

Most of us take it for granted that the food we eat and the fields our children play on at school or in our own back yards are not putting their health at risk. But unfortunately, too often, that is not the case.

First introduced in the early 1970's, Roundup, and its generic equivalents have become the most widely used agricultural chemical in U.S. history. When it was introduced, it was billed as safer than others herbicides. But evidence is mounting that herbicides like Roundup pose significant health concerns.

The World Health Organization has warned that the main ingredient in Monsanto's Roundup, glyphosate, is a probable human carcinogen. Despite the risks, we spray 26 million pounds of Roundup on public parks, playgrounds, schools and gardens every year. And now studies are finding glyphosate in places it shouldn't be including cereals, beer, ice cream, and our bodies.

S. 517 will reduce exposure and use of glyphosate by preventing the use of glyphosate in our parks, schools and other public lands.

S.516 & H.813 will reduce the use of glyphosate-containing herbicides by restricting its use to licensed pesticide applicators only and banning the consumer use of the herbicide.

### **Protecting Children and Wildlife from Exposure to Toxic Pesticides, S.487 and H.825**

In 2012 the [American Academy of Pediatrics \(AAP\)](#) called for governments to reduce children's exposure to pesticides. AAP wrote that scientific evidence "...demonstrates associations between early life exposure to pesticides and pediatric cancers, decreased cognitive function, and

behavioral problems.”

However, many Massachusetts schools and child care centers permit the use of an arsenal of toxic pesticides on outdoor grounds, including glyphosate and 2,4-D, potentially endangering children’s health.

Children are at higher risk of illness from pesticides as they absorb more pesticides relative to their body weight than adults and children’s organ systems are still developing and are [less able to detoxify harmful chemicals](#).

Of the [30 most commonly used lawn pesticides](#), 16 are possible and/or known carcinogens, 17 have the potential to disrupt the endocrine (hormonal) system, 21 are linked to reproductive effects and sexual dysfunction, 12 have been linked to birth defects, 14 are neurotoxic, 25 can cause kidney or liver damage, and 26 are sensitizers and/or irritants.

And children with elevated levels of commonly used pyrethroid insecticides, often applied to manage ants and other common schoolyard pests, are [more likely to have emotional and behavioral problems](#). Boys with detectable urinary 3-PBA, a biomarker of exposure to pyrethroids, are [three times as likely to have ADHD compared with those without detectable 3-PBA](#).

### **Wildlife**

In the last few years a number of bald eagles have been found dead after suspected fatal hemorrhage after consuming smaller animals who had consumed rat poisoning.

Anticoagulant rodenticides are a type of rodent poison that kills by preventing blood from clotting normally, resulting in a fatal hemorrhage. Wildlife and pets are in danger when homeowners and businesses choose to use anticoagulant rodenticides a/k/a rat poisons, to control rodents. While personal use of these second-generation anticoagulants (SGARS) is already banned in MA, licensed pest companies can still use it when hired to deal with rodent problem.

S. 487 and H. 825 will protect children and wildlife from exposure to toxic pesticides by,

- Requiring MDAR (Dept. of Agricultural Resources) to use an online database for pesticide use reporting records
- Requiring the use of integrated pest management plans on the lands of public institution of higher education (it’s already required for K-12)
- Allowing only pesticides considered minimum risk by the U.S. EPA and those permitted for organic to be allowed near schools and child care centers in Massachusetts (except in the case of a health emergency when school officials could apply for a waiver).

This bill is a combination of 2 bills which passed the committee, and both branches but the clock ran out and failed final passage.

**Protecting Pollinators: S.520, H.843 Sen. Jason Lewis and Rep. Mary Keefe, *An Act to protect pollinator habitat* and S.479, Sen. Jamie Eldridge, *An Act protecting pollinators by eliminating harmful products***

A [2019 Scientific Literature Review](#) performed by the Mass. Dept. of Agricultural Resources found overwhelming evidence that neonicotinoid insecticides (“neonics”) are harming pollinators. The research found that virtually all of the impact-based studies reviewed (42 of 43) cited “neonics” as a contributor to pollinator declines, and pointed out that the only study with mixed results was industry-funded.

In response, the department subsequently [decided to end consumer use](#) of neonic products. Which is a good first step. However, the agricultural sectors use significantly higher volumes of these pollinator-killing pesticides. A [recent study](#) found that U.S. Agriculture is 48 times more toxic to insect life than it was in the early 1990s; neonicotinoids account for more than 90% of that increase.

The loss and degradation of natural habitat is a [primary driver](#) of pollinator declines around the globe, along with pesticide exposure, climate change, and disease.

S.520/H.825 will protect pollinators by establishing a commission to study statewide opportunities for improving pollinator health by increasing and enhancing native habitat and examine the many issues relevant to pollinator health including our current laws and regulations, funding, practices and the use of agricultural and non-agricultural lands.

S.479, will further protect pollinators by making it illegal for any neonic product to be “sprayed, released, deposited or applied on any property within the commonwealth.” The bill does exempt neonic-treated nursery plants from the prohibition. Any blooming or flowering plant, plant material or seed that has been treated with a neonicotinoids would have to be “clearly and conspicuously labeled as having been treated with a neonicotinoid” and include “a brief description of the risks to pollinators and other non-target organisms associated with the use of neonicotinoids.”

***An Act relative to the pesticide board* S.521/H.783 Sen. Jason Lewis and Rep. Mindy Domb**

S.521/H.783 will establish a new task force to review and make recommendations on how Massachusetts can prevent and mitigate adverse impacts of pesticide use on the environment and public health. The task force will examine the current system and make recommendations on how to modernize and improve our current pesticide regulatory and management systems.

This bill passed this committee last session.

Thank you for hearing my testimony today. MASSPIRG urges you to pass these bills from your committee.

