

Submitter: Jerome Colonna  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Education  
Measure: SB426

Hello, my name is Jerome Colonna and I am submitting testimony in favor of SB 426. I have been working without interruption in Oregon's public education systems for the last 56 years. During this time I've served as a teacher in Corvallis, an administrator in Eugene, superintendent in Redmond and Beaverton, and a member of the State Board of Education from 2014 until 2022. For the past 12 years I've been working as a school district strategic planning consultant throughout Oregon.

It is my belief that the proper implementation of SB 426 will greatly reduce our Pre-K students' pesticide exposure that many now encounter in and around Oregon's public school playgrounds and athletic fields. We know toxic pesticide chemicals can increase the severity of a number of respiratory health problems and some cancers. We also know school-aged children are more susceptible to harmful pesticides than are adults and so we must do all we can to protect them. SB 426 will be a significant step in this direction. I am also advocating for increased protection for our classified staff members who apply pesticides and maintain school grounds and facilities.

A number of Oregon's school districts are not in compliance with Integrated Pest Management (IPM) requirements. In my strategic planning consultant role I work mainly with smaller, often isolated school districts. With their limited non-teaching staff it is very difficult for them to complete all of the required state and federal reports. SB 426 will especially assist our smaller districts though its proposed, highly improved record-keeping system that will allow them to record, post, and submit their records much easier.

An addition strong component of the Toxic Free Schools bill is the required quarterly stakeholder meetings that will strengthen health and pesticide expertise, improve decision-making, and increase compliance.

Finally, I am impressed with the many organizations who have endorsed this bill such as, the Oregon Pediatric Society, League of Women Voters, Healthy Babies and Bright Futures, Physicians for Social Responsibility, Beyond Toxics, and the Oregon Student Association to name just a few.

Please vote in favor of SB 426 to protect our children's health and reduce toxic chemicals in Oregon's environment.