

February 23, 2023

Chair Dembrow and Members of the Senate Committee on Education:

I'm writing on behalf of Center for Food Safety to share our **strong support for SB 426**, the Toxic Free Schools Act, and urge the committee to send it out of the committee with a do pass recommendation.

Center for Food Safety (CFS) has over 17,000 members in Oregon and works on their behalf to protect our people and planet the harms of pesticide use. Pesticides, rightly called biocides, have negative impacts to many more organisms than just the pests they target, including major impacts on our health and the health of our environment. CFS has worked for decades to protect people and the planet from these biocides by holding our regulators accountable and passing new laws to increase protections. This includes litigation when necessary to enforce our federal pesticide safety law and wildlife protection laws, and work to improve those laws on a federal level through the Protecting America's Children from Toxic Pesticides Act (PACTPA).

Children are among the most vulnerable to health harms from pesticides, as they are still developing. As our regulators have long known, children suffer some of the worst impacts from pesticide exposure in their environment.¹ Even in small amounts, pesticide exposures can severely impact children's health, including putting them at higher risk of asthma, learning disabilities, and chronic illnesses. But adequate protections for our kids are not currently in place or enforced on the federal level, leaving it to the states to further protect their most vulnerable communities. Like other toxic substances, such as lead, radon, or asbestos, we must protect our children, particularly at schools which should be a safe and healthy place for learning.

SB 426 would ensure that schools are safe places for children by treating pesticides like these other toxic substances, which have a much better history of testing and report. SB 426 would also complete the unfinished business from the 2009 School Integrated Pest Management (IPM) law by including the key stakeholders in the decision making process, and end an unfunded mandate for school districts to fully protect our kids. SB 426 will equip school districts with simple and easy electronic record keeping systems to aid their compliance and end current unfair practices in reporting to parents.

For all these reasons, it's time for SB 426 to protect our kids and ensure equitable access to information for parents. These children are Oregon's future and deserve to toxic-free schools.

Best,

Amy van Saun
Senior Attorney
Center for Food Safety
avansaun@centerforfoodsafety.org

¹ CFS, Pesticides & Children's Health (2015) <https://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/fact-sheets/3900/pesticides-and-childrens-health>.