

Testimony from NRC Chair Katie Griffith in Support of H.776/S.447

My name is Katie Griffith and I serve as chair of the Wellesley Natural Resources Commission, a five-member elected board with broad responsibility for our town's conservation land, parks, and natural resources. We also hold the statutory authority of Pest Control Officers for our town, and for the last decade we have successfully managed our public lands, including playing fields, without the use of pesticides. However, we are frustrated by the continued use of pesticides on private property. Private properties make up the bulk of land in our town and are especially critical because they surround ponds and watersheds that feed into our water wells.

As an elected official, a plant ecologist, and a mother of three children, I am greatly concerned by the use of these chemicals in our town and I am here today to voice my support, along with the support of my Board, and a great number of our constituents' for the many proposed pesticide-reduction bills before you today. We are especially enthusiastic about House Bill 776 proposed by Representative Dylan Fernandes, which would allow municipalities to adopt ordinances and by-laws that regulate, restrict or prohibit the use and application or disposal of pesticides within their city or town. As a board, we work hard to educate all members of the public about the health and environmental dangers of pesticides, but we feel strongly that it's time to take a bigger step. It is important to recognize that it's not just the adults or elected boards that are concerned about this issue. Our concerns are also shared by children in our town, three of whom are here today! It is an honor to introduce these students from Wellesley Middle School who wrote a letter to our board last year about their concerns of pesticide use near their school and homes. I'd like to introduce Jack Burkhead, Kavin Shah and Natalia Medina.

See Testimony from Wellesley 6th Grade Students [Here](#)

Testimony from NRC Vice Chair Raina McManus in Support of H.776/S.447

I'm Raina McManus, Vice Chair of the Wellesley Natural Resources Commission, and like many in this room, I was present to testify two years ago in October of 2017 on very similar pesticide reduction bills. Since that time, numerous research studies only confirm the harmful effects of these chemicals in our environment.

I respectfully suggest that the time to take action is now. Thank you for your hard work, and for having us here today!

Testimony from Brandon Schmitt in Support of H.776/S.447

My name is Brandon Schmitt, and I am the Director of the Wellesley Natural Resources Commission, or NRC, a group of 5-elected Wellesley residents who among a wide range of responsibilities are charged with protecting the natural resources of the community for future generations.

Wellesley has long recognized the public and environmental health hazards associated with pesticides. In 1992 the Town formed a study committee which recommended, among other things, to initiate a public awareness campaign to reduce pesticide use.

In 1998 residents initiated the Wellesley Cancer Prevention Project, and the group suspected that the abundance of synthetic pesticides was a likely contributor to higher than average incidence of cancer in the community, particularly concerning in a town that supplies most of its own water from public wells.

In 2001, the Wellesley NRC, Health, Public Works, and School Departments collaborated on another pesticide awareness and reduction strategy for the Town, which included an Organic Pest Management Policy governing pesticide use on all town-owned property, and set an example for private property owners.

Interest from surrounding communities encouraged Wellesley to expand their educational efforts on a regional level. With support from the Toxics Use Reduction Institute and the DEP, 12 communities signed on to a Regional Pesticide Awareness Collaborative to develop meaningful and consistent outreach on the subject.

Both the state Legislature and Senate have honored our work and the 2002 Source Water Assessment and Protection report, in a special note, commended the NRC's pesticide use reduction efforts.

We continue our legacy of pesticide awareness in Wellesley, including mapping and highlighting all pesticide free homes with our healthy lawn signs.

In her 5-year tenure as Wellesley's Pesticide Awareness Coordinator, Dr. Sarah Little confirmed the following:

1. *Organic IPM policies on municipal land work extremely well*
2. *the State's current laws do not protect sensitive areas and populations from unnecessary exposure to pesticides*
3. *State regulation and enforcement of existing pesticide laws are insufficient and inconsistent,*
4. *local public education is not enough to reduce private commercial and residential pesticide use*

Municipalities like Wellesley have responded to scientific evidence, their residents' concerns, and their area's unique ecological conditions to reduce exposure to hazardous pesticides. However, in states that have passed preemption laws, local governments must bend over backwards to pass local legislation that fits our community's needs. These restrictions keep us from doing our job as policymakers. Despite Wellesley's long-standing Organic Pest Management Plan and decades long public education effort, pesticide use on private property remains a pervasive problem in the community and endangers our public health.

The time to try a new approach is now, and we ask for your support of this Bill to empower us to protect our residents and the environment from harmful pesticides.