



# *Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association*

## *Common Ground Country Fair*

### **Testimony In Support of LD 1098 – An Act to Protect Children from Exposure to Pesticides April 16, 2015**

Good afternoon Senator Edgecomb, Representative Hickman and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. My name is Heather Spalding and I'm the Deputy Director of the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA). Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of LD 1098.

MOFGA has nearly 11,000 members and our family members are committed to MOFGA's mission. Our families love what MOFGA does, the organic farmers who grow their food and they want to protect all Maine children from exposure to pesticides.

There is a growing awareness of the threats to kids' health from pesticide exposure and a corresponding increase in learning how to farm, garden and maintain beautiful lawns without the use of pesticides. Every week, families in Maine learn about the dangers of pesticides to their children's and their own health. Families are concerned and they are expecting public officials to respond appropriately to science-based information about pesticide risk and how to reduce exposure to pesticides.

MOFGA supports increased restrictions on the use of pesticides where children are present. Every week we hear of new scientific evidence that childhood exposure to pesticides is leading to serious illness. One of the most obvious examples is the weedkiller glyphosate, commonly known as Roundup. You can't miss the barrage of family and kid-friendly advertising of Roundup products on television and in print publications. Kids gleefully rolling on glyphosate-treated lawns with golden retriever puppies – not a dandelion in sight.

Monsanto has worked hard to calm public fears about its popular range of Roundup products. Yet Roundup is tied to acute human health effects and linked to non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. It is one of the most widely used and well-known herbicides on the market.

As Jay Feldman of Beyond Pesticides said, "If there is one pesticide that represents the 'fast-food,' quick-fix generation, glyphosate would likely be it – the McPesticide of toxic chemicals."

The research arm of the World Health Organization has declared that glyphosate should now be categorized as a "probable carcinogen" for humans.

We understand and appreciate the need to protect public health when stinging or biting insects or public health nuisances such as mosquitoes and ticks present an urgent threat to the health or safety of students or staff members.

However, we strongly recommend that this committee, public schools and local governments consider an organic land care requirement for management of playgrounds, ball fields, and property of local government and private land that is regularly used by school children. Organic landcare professionals know how to manage turf organically, without the use of synthetic and hazardous pesticides. They know how to control broadleaf weeds and grubs without spreading

herbicides and larvacides on fields where children are present. Proper watering, top dressing of compost, aeration and the use of natural microbial insecticides are effective.

The Board of Pesticides Control's Chapter 27 regulates the use of pesticides in schools and mandates integrated pest management (IPM) approach. IPM can vary widely but it is our understanding and expectation that responsible use in any IPM program should include the safest, effective materials, biological and mechanical controls. Organic land care systems should be the standard on all parks, playgrounds and outdoor areas where children play. Maine should also promote organic methods at school gardens, as well as local, organic Maine foods in school cafeterias.

Such measures will protect the health of Maine kids, will reduce Maine's reliance on hazardous landscaping chemicals, will improve the health and quality of Maine's playgrounds and parks and ball fields, will encourage land care professionals to learn about viable alternatives to conventional turf management, and, over time, will reduce the amount of taxpayer dollars going toward school grounds maintenance.

Thank you very much for your consideration.