



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brian X. Foley

Senator Foley, Assemblyman Englebright, Commissioner Grannis Celebrate Groundbreaking Legislation

BRIAN X. FOLEY August 11, 2010

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Senator Brian X. Foley (D – Blue Point), Assemblyman Steve Englebright (D – Setauket) and Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Pete Grannis were joined today by environmental advocates today to celebrate the signing of the Child Safe Playing Fields Act. This law protects children and the environment by banning the use of harmful pesticides on school fields and playgrounds, as well as at daycare centers.

Pesticides are used in many communities on Long Island to maintain lawns and playing fields. These substances have been shown to cause harm to both the environment and the children who utilize the fields, including contaminating groundwater and causing nervous, reproductive and immune system disorders. A recent study published in the journal of Pediatrics also links exposure to pesticides to the development of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Although research regarding the link between pesticides and childhood diseases and disorders continues, the result is clear: pesticides are dangerous and need to be limited around the most vulnerable members of our community.

“As the school year begins anew in September, it will bring new notebooks, new pencils and a new sense of security for parents as they send their children off to class,” said Senator Foley. “This law will result in a sharp reduction in children’s exposure to pesticides that were applied on school grounds. Keeping pesticides away from our children will protect them from the harmful side effects that could result, including, as a recent study suggested, the development of ADHD. Any time we can reduce the use of pesticides it is also a win for the environment because we are protecting the air we breathe and the water we drink on a daily basis.”

“The routine application of chemical pesticides to school fields has made play into a hazardous activity for our kids,” said Assemblyman Englebright. “Needless overuse of pesticides in play spaces has for too long risked our children’s health because their incomplete immune systems are no match for pesticides that can sicken them now and set them up for cancer or other illnesses later in life. With this new law there is every likelihood that our children will enjoy a healthier school environment in which to grow, learn and achieve.”

“DEC fully supports limiting the use of pesticides in outdoor settings at schools and daycare facilities precisely because infants and children are so much more susceptible to the effects

of toxic pesticides than adults,” said Commissioner Grannis. “Children using playgrounds and playing fields come into direct contact with pesticides applied to those areas. This new law is a great complement to DEC’s new Be Green program which promotes organic lawn care and is one more important step towards a toxic free future.”

“One school supply that schools will need less of will be toxic pesticides for playing fields, since next year they’ll be prohibited,” said Adrienne Esposito, Executive Director of Citizens Campaign for the Environment. “Planning for future protection of our children’s health starts today. We are hopeful schools will begin this critical transition in September. Healthy schools mean healthy children. Congratulations to Senator Brian Foley, Assemblyman Steve Englebright and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation for their valuable leadership on this issue.”

“Children are particularly vulnerable to the health effects of pesticides,” said Demosthenes Maratos, Program Director for the Long Island Neighborhood Network. “Exposing kids to toxic pesticides on schools ball fields and day care playgrounds is unacceptable since safe, effective alternatives for turf maintenance are available. Senator Foley and Assemblyman Englebright are to be congratulated for their leadership in bringing about the most significant pesticide legislation to be enacted in New York State in many years.”

“We applaud Senator Brian Foley and Assemblyman Englebright for championing this critical environmental bill, which will save schools money while protecting children and birds from the dangers of pesticides,” said Albert E. Caccese, Executive Director of Audubon New York. “Each year, millions of pounds of pesticides and synthetic fertilizers are used on schools and lawns across the state and nation, creating one of the largest sources of pollution runoff and causing the death of over 7 million birds annually. By eliminating the use of these chemicals at schools, we are now making these places safe and inviting for birds, other wildlife and children.”

“By restricting the use of pesticides on school fields and daycare centers, New York’s kids will win big,” said David Gahl, Policy Director of Environmental Advocates of New York.

“Pesticides are highly toxic and extremely hazardous to children, and have been linked to cancer and birth defects. This new law will help sideline toxic pesticide use. It is an important step toward protecting our environment and our children.”

The law amends various provisions in the law to allow the Department of Environmental Conservation and the Department of Health to develop guidance on pesticide alternatives and to limit the use of pesticides on school grounds and at daycare centers. The law includes provisions to allow for the emergency application of pesticides in rare and exceptional cases. However, with alternative lawn products on the market that are both safer and more cost-effective for consumers, it is believed that these instances will be few and far between.

The legislation was signed into law by Governor Paterson in May.