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March 8, 2011

The Honorable Florence Shapiro  
Texas State Senator, District 8  
Capitol Office 1E.3  
P.O. Box 12068  
Austin, Texas 78711

Cc: Senate Education committee

Dear Chairwoman Shapiro,

I am writing in opposition to a provision of SB 3 which could put the health of Texas school children at risk and actually increase costs for school districts.

In 1993, Texas became one of the first states to require schools to use least toxic methods to control pests (see: Section 1951.212 of the Occupations Code). The law has been very successful, reducing use of some of the most dangerous chemicals in our schools and saving most school districts money. Unfortunately, your bill would repeal this law.

According to a 2005 Texas AgriLife Extension survey of over 500 Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Coordinators, "53% felt that the IPM requirements had actually reduced long-term costs of pest management. Fifteen percent believed there was no change in cost to the district. Only 18% of districts said that they felt the school IPM regulations had increased the long-term costs of pest control to their district." Furthermore, "schools were 75% more likely to be satisfied with their pest control program compared to 1993, before the law went into effect. In addition, the study found that 75% of school IPM coordinators believe that the state IPM requirements have resulted in more effective pest management in their districts."

Children are especially vulnerable to pesticide exposure as they take in more pesticides relative to their body weight than adults and have developing organ systems that are less able to detoxify toxic chemicals. According to the group Beyond Pesticides, of the 40 most commonly used pesticides in schools, "28 can cause cancer, 14 are linked to endocrine disruption, 26 can adversely affect reproduction, 26 are nervous system poisons and 13 can cause birth defects."

As a result, many organizations including the National PTA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention urge schools to use IPM programs. We urge you to remove the repeal of Texas' successful healthy schools law from SB 3.

Sincerely,

Luke Metzger  
Director