

Testimony in Opposition to SB443 before the
CT Senate Environment Committee
18 March 2014

L. Val Giddings, Ph.D.
Senior Fellow, Information Technology & Innovation Foundation, Washington DC

This testimony is presented in opposition to language proposed for SB443 that would prohibit growing in CT grass varieties improved through advanced breeding to be superior in sustainability, environmental impact, and management characteristics to other grass varieties.

The specific grass varieties being wrongly attacked would require less water, less fertilizer, fewer pesticides, provide superior weed management characteristics, and require less frequent mowing than otherwise comparable varieties. Risk assessments by the US Department of Agriculture and US Environmental Protection Agency have shown such scant cause for concern that they have declined to exercise further oversight.

The assertion has been advanced that glyphosate, the active ingredient in herbicides to which this grass variety is resistant, is responsible for a variety of negative environmental and human health impacts, and that these alleged impacts require the proposed prohibition. These claims have been considered and rejected by regulatory authorities and competent scientists around the world, most particularly those at the USEPA, repeatedly. In fact, both the data and vast experience confirm the remarkable safety profile of glyphosate¹, which has been responsible for much of the dramatic reduction in environmental impacts² from the use in agriculture of seeds improved through biotechnology around the world.³

Herbicides containing glyphosate (most commonly, Roundup) are not a threat to Connecticut's natural resources nor the health of its citizens. These herbicides have a long history of safe use and are a valuable agricultural tool in more than 100 countries around the world. Comprehensive toxicological studies repeated over the last 40 years have time and again demonstrated that glyphosate, the active ingredient in Roundup(r) branded agricultural herbicides, does not cause cancer, mutagenic effects, nervous system effects, immune system effects, endocrine disruption, birth defects or reproductive problems. Glyphosate degrades over time in soil and natural waters and has favorable environmental characteristics, including tight binding to most soils, making it unlikely to move to groundwater or reach non-target plants. In fact, Roundup branded herbicides have been used by habitat restoration groups in the Galapagos Islands.

The State of Connecticut has made considerable efforts in recent years to present itself as a good place to do business. It has in particular been eager to attract biotechnology and biomedical enterprises to the state because of the high quality jobs they bring and the highly beneficial goods and services they

¹ See <http://www.cdms.net/ldat/mp7rd001.pdf>

² See <https://www.landesbioscience.com/journals/gmcrops/article/24459/>

³ See <http://isaaa.org/resources/publications/briefs/46/executivesummary/default.asp>

deliver. Yet this push to prohibit new seed varieties improved through the very same technologies is part of a pattern through which Connecticut legislators have repeatedly been stigmatized and attacked the products developed by this industry via proposals advanced in the State Legislature without benefit of any justification in science, data, or experience.