



Over 125 Years of Education, Conservation & Advocacy

Audubon Society of Rhode Island

February 12, 2025

Representative Joseph McNamara
Chair, House Education Committee
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02908

Re: Audubon Society of Rhode Island Supports H 5216, Relating to Health and Safety – Pesticide Control

Dear Chair McNamara and members of the House Education Committee

Audubon Society of Rhode Island and our 17,000 members and supporters have been engaged with pesticide management and regulation for our entire 125 year history. Pesticides and rodenticides harm birds and wildlife including raptors and pollinating insects. These chemicals pose dangers not just to wildlife, but to humans, particularly children. This bill is necessary given the dangers, lack of current education on these dangers, and the difficulty of effective treatment after exposure.

It is not uncommon for multiple pesticides and rodenticides to be used concurrently at schools, vocational centers, and daycares, exposing young children to potential harm. These institutions should keep children safe and provide a productive learning environment. Information that these chemicals are being applied must be communicated.

These poisons may be consumed, inhaled, or touched by a child to impact their health. In addition to natural exploratory behaviors, children are particularly susceptible to the dangers of pesticides due to their smaller size. According to the American Association of Poison Control Centers in 2023, children aged five years and younger made up around 70% of the thousands of cases of reported anticoagulant rodenticide poisonings. Anticoagulant rodenticides are only one of several classes of rodenticides. They are designed to cause slow, painful internal bleeding. Commonly used to kill rodents, this pesticide accumulates over time. Even in small doses, repeated exposures become more and more dangerous. Effective treatment is available, but parents need to know if these poisons are being used around their children in order to recognize the symptoms of poisonings. Effective treatment may only be successful when the type of rodenticide being used is known. The state of California has already banned all anticoagulant rodenticides for use except in certain agricultural settings due to the harm to children and wildlife. Many cities and states are beginning to follow-suit, including a bill to be introduced shortly here in Rhode Island. Given the dangers, notifying parents is the least we can do.

Audubon Society of Rhode Island has consistently advocated against pesticides that are dangerous to wildlife and humans, including DDT, used to control insect populations. In the 1940s and 50s, DDT was

the most widely used insecticide in the United States. In 1972, DDT was banned across the United States because of its incredible harm on wildlife and people. Research from 2021 at Oakland's Public Health Institute indicated that the third generation of children after exposure to DDT experienced detrimental health impacts.

Today, neonicotinoids are the most commonly used class of pesticides, used widely on farms and in urban landscapes. Although less acutely toxic to mammals and other vertebrates than older insecticides, neonicotinoids are highly toxic in small quantities to bees. Research on the impact on humans and children is limited. Still, acute poisoning studies have found associations between chronic neonic exposure and adverse developmental outcomes and symptoms of neurological effects. In 2016, The National Institute of Health deemed these impacts plausible due to measured neonicotinoids impacts on animals.

Neonicotinoids and anticoagulant rodenticides are only two types of the numerous pesticides used in Rhode Island. Many pesticides and anticoagulant rodenticides are readily available to consumers, businesses, schools, and daycares who need not obtain a license, further increasing the chance of improper application.

In Audubon's work educating and advocating on neonicotinoid and anticoagulant rodenticides, we have found knowledge of these harms to be shockingly limited and we receive many questions regarding where and how these poisons are being used. This bill provides a simple, reasonable, and minimal measure to increase transparency and educate on the dangers and symptoms of pesticides and rodenticides in order to protect some of our most vulnerable.

We would like to thank Representative Carson for sponsoring this important piece of legislation. We urge the House Education Committee to vote HB 5216 favorably out of committee.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Phoenix Wheeler (they/them)
Director of Advocacy