



**February 12, 2025**

Rhode Island State Assembly  
House Committee on Education, Room 135  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

Representative Joseph M. McNamara, Chair  
Representative Thomas E. Noret, First Vice Chair  
Representative Rebecca M. Kislak, Second Vice Chair

**RE: Testimony on HB 5216 – An Act Related to Health and Safety- Pesticide Control**

Dear Chair McNamara, Vice Chair Noret, and Vice Chair Kislak, and Members of the House Committee on Education:

The New England Pest Management Association (NEPMA) represents the professional pest management industry in Rhode Island as well as Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont. Our members in Rhode Island are committed to providing high-quality pest management services that protect public health, food and property. We appreciate this opportunity to share our thoughts on **HB 5216 and respectfully ask that you oppose this legislation.**

NEPMA members provide professional pest management services across Rhode Island in schools, homes, rental properties, hospitals, senior centers, food processing facilities, grocery stores, and hotels. In these settings, pest management professionals (PMPs) use EPA- and state-registered pesticide products in low-volume, highly targeted applications to manage a variety of pests, including bedbugs, cockroaches, mosquitoes, and rodents. With all applications, we carefully consider the environmental factors and risks associated with the location of the pest infestation.

We have the same goal as the Committee of protecting the next generation from potential pesticide exposure. However, HB 5216 may create more challenges than benefits in protecting children's health and safety. The prohibition on pesticides, including rodenticides, could lead to persistent pest problems as the alternative products may not be as effective, and the emergency pesticide use provision could lead to delays in addressing harmful pest issues. Overall, the bill could overcomplicate regulations and create unintended consequences, impacting the ability of our schools to maintain a safe and healthy learning environment.

We are concerned that the state is placing more responsibilities on its school systems, which are already strained in its resources. Requiring the school to create, implement and maintain integrated pest management (IPM) plans would add significant constraints, especially given that the professional pest management companies servicing the schools, already utilize IPM methods in their treatment plans. Considering oversight required by multiple parties on a school approved IPM plan, this could lead to delays in pest control and create additional barriers for schools to address the issue in a timely manner.

## **Rhode Island Schools Require Reliable and Effective Pest Control**

The proposed restriction on pesticide and rodenticide use in schools and childcare centers could create significant obstacles in maintaining safe, healthy environments for students. While the intent of the act is to reduce potential pesticide exposure, alternative pest control methods—such as organic or non-chemical approaches—may not be as effective or efficient in managing ongoing pest issues. Additionally, restricting pesticides may allow pest populations to grow unchecked, increasing the risk of diseases being spread to students. For example, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), rodents can transmit over 35 diseases such as hantavirus, rat bite fever, trichinosis, plague, infectious jaundice, Weil's disease, and leptospirosis,<sup>1</sup> while insects such as ticks and mosquitoes are known carriers of diseases like Lyme disease and West Nile virus.

By limiting the tools available for pest control, this act could inadvertently raise health risks, putting students' well-being in jeopardy. It's essential to strike a balance between reducing chemical exposure and ensuring effective pest control to protect student health. A real-world example of the consequences can be seen in Methuen, Massachusetts. After imposing restrictions on rodenticides around school perimeters, the rodent population exploded, creating hazardous conditions for both students and staff, and even threatening the schools' ability to remain open.

It is also important to acknowledge that some alternative pest control methods can carry their own health risks. With fewer chemical options, schools may experience more frequent pest infestations, resulting in a less sanitary environment for children. This could disrupt learning and activities, further harming the school environment. Moreover, the improper application of natural or organic methods could expose students to harmful substances, undermining the act's intent to protect them.

Lastly, although the act permits pesticide use in emergencies, the definition of "emergency" is vague. This lack of clarity could leave schools unsure about when it's appropriate to apply pesticides, potentially causing delays in addressing pest control issues. Without clear guidelines, schools may struggle to act quickly enough to prevent the spread of pests that could jeopardize the health and safety of students.

## **HB 5216's Impact to Rhode Island School Systems**

Requiring school districts to develop and implement an integrated pest management (IPM) plan could impose significant operational and financial burdens on schools. These plans would require additional funding and specialized staff training, which may be difficult for some schools to manage. Additionally, the act would increase administrative duties, requiring schools to submit pesticide application notices to both parents and the Department of Education.

This could disproportionately affect underfunded districts, which may need to reallocate resources from other crucial areas, such as educational programs or infrastructure improvements, in order to

---

<sup>1</sup> [CDC. \(2024\). How to control wild rodent infestations. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.](#)

comply. As a result, school resources would be further strained, potentially compromising the quality of education and facilities available to students.

HB 5216's requirement for schools to send notices to parents about pesticide applications could also create confusion and excessive communication. Many parents may not have the time or expertise to evaluate the significance of pesticide use, potentially leading to unnecessary anxiety about perceived risks. This additional communication could create more challenges for schools, parents, and the community, rather than offering a clearer understanding of pest management practices.

### **Rhode Island Should Follow the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Actions on PFAS**

The creation of a task force to study the health risks of PFAS is a well-intended effort, given the serious public health concerns surrounding these chemicals. However, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is already conducting extensive research, implementing restrictions, and working on remediation efforts at the federal level. Therefore, focusing on PFAS at the state level may delay necessary actions to address broader environmental and health issues impacting our schools. By concentrating on one specific issue without fully considering its wider implications, HB 5216 could unintentionally slow progress on more urgent risks that schools and communities are facing.

In summary, while HB 5216 aims to protect children's health and safety, NEPMA is concerned that it would create more problems than it solves, including ineffective pest control, increased administrative burdens, and additional challenges for schools in maintaining safe and healthy environments. **We respectfully request the Committee vote unfavorably on HB 5216.**

Sincerely,

Kevin Goldman  
Rhode Island State Policy Affairs Representative (SPAR)  
**New England Pest Management Association**  
[goldman@bigbluebug.com](mailto:goldman@bigbluebug.com)