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NEW STUDY DEMONSTRATES THE NEED FOR PESTICIDE BUFFER ZONES AROUND SCHOOLS

ASSEMBLYMEMBER SWANSON'S HEALTH AND SAFETY SCHOOL ZONES ACT ESTABLISHES CONSISTENT BUFFER ZONES AROUND CALIFORNIA SCHOOLS

Assemblymember Sandré R. Swanson (D-Oakland) joined a group of environmental organizations to introduce a new environmental study, *Pesticide Protection Zones: Keeping Kids Safe at School*. The report concluded that eleven counties have no pesticide protection zones around schools at all, while another six counties only limit pesticide spraying when school is in session. The report also found that 25 percent of the counties have larger pesticide buffer zones for crops than for schools.

“The findings in this new report make clear the need for a simple, statewide rule to protect our children consistently,” said Assemblymember Swanson, author of AB 1721, which addresses the problem of pesticide drift and application by prohibiting restricted-use pesticides within a quarter mile of any California school and within a half mile for any non-restricted pesticides.

“It is outrageous that some counties are protecting peach and nut crops more stringently than they are protecting children. A child in one school is protected from pesticide drift because a peach crop is located nearby, while a child a few miles away has no such protections—protections should not be doled out based on a school’s location near a favored crop. AB 1721 will accomplish a statewide rule to protect California children from pesticide drift at school, no matter where that child’s school is located.”

“Many communities recognize the unintended side-effects of aerial spraying and have passed ordinances to protect their school sites. These ordinances, however, are inconsistent and I plan to work cooperatively with the Legislature to pass a statewide rule through AB 1721,” said Assemblymember Swanson.

Paul Towers, Director of the Pesticide Watch Education Fund and co-author of the report, said, “It is past time for a simple, statewide rule that protects all California children from pesticide drift at school. Assemblymember Swanson’s AB 1721 fixes the problems outlined in our report in an elegant and simple way. It is past time for a rule that protects all California children from pesticide drift at school,” said Towers.

AB 1721 is scheduled for a hearing with the Assembly Environmental Safety and Toxic Materials Committee on March 23, 2010.

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