



Testimony of Eric Smith
On behalf of the Advocates for Herring Bay
Regarding HB 605/SB 163 – Pollinator Protection Act of 2015
March 10, 2015

As a community group that works to protect our local environment, the Advocates for Herring Bay (AHB) strongly support HB 605/SB 163, Pollinator Protection Act of 2015.”

Here is a real-life example of one way this bill affects us:

In response to declining numbers of pollinating insects, AHB launched a pilot program in 2014 aimed at restoring pollinator habitat in our yards. Together we planted 525 carefully selected native plants favored by local bees, butterflies and migrating monarchs. This year we will expand this project, still focusing on our own gardens and tripling the number of native plants.

Without the protection provided in this bill, we could unwittingly purchase plants grown from neonicotoid-treated seeds. Seed treatment is the most prevalent application for neonicotoid pesticides and plants from these seeds retain the pesticide throughout all their parts, including nectar harvested by bees and leaves eaten by caterpillars. If seeds and nursery stocks are not labeled, we could be harming the very pollinators we are trying to assist.

The Pollinator Protection Act of 2015 is a balanced bill. It would not disrupt farming operations or the work of registered users. It simply requires labeling and limits distribution in retail settings used by people like us. The fiscal note indicates that the state and some small businesses will incur costs to implement the bill. It’s important to bear in mind that native, non-livestock bees are estimated to contribute more than \$3 billion of profit to our national agricultural production. Keeping these pollinators healthy is imperative and the long-term economic benefits of this bill far outweigh its estimated transition costs.

Finally, we believe the risks associated with these pesticides warrant this measure of restraint. Every pesticide harms pollinators; however, there is a growing body of scientific evidence showing that neonicotoid pesticides in particular have serious damaging effects on honey bees, native bees, and other important and valued insects. Bird specialists also note their detrimental effect on songbirds.

The Pollinator Protection Act of 2015 is a responsible and well-crafted measure to promote the ecological health of Maryland. We value the natural vitality of our state and, as your constituents, we urge you to vote in favor of HB 605/SB 163.