



The Honorable Senator Pamela Beidle, Chair: Finance Committee
The Honorable Senator Katherine Klausmeier, Vice Chair: Finance Committee

CC:

The Honorable Senator Artuher Ellis
The Honorable Senator Dawn Gile
The Honorable Senator Anotonio Hayes
The Honorable Senator Stephen S. Hershey, Jr.
The Honorable Senator Benjamin Kramer
The Honorable Senator Clarence Lam
The Honorable Senator Johnny Mautz
The Honorable Senator Justin Ready
The Honorable Senator Alonzo Washington

29 January 2024

Subject: American Bird Conservancy strongly supports SB0718

Dear Senators,

American Bird Conservancy, which works to conserve birds and their habitats across the Americas, strongly supports SB0718, Senator Klausmeier's Pollinator Habitat Plan Requirements for State Highway Administration bill. The bill does a marvelous job of supporting Maryland's vital infrastructure while recognizing the potential held by roadside areas to support species and ecosystem services.

Maryland's unique position on the Eastern Seaboard, as well as habitat diversity inland, makes it an important state for migratory birds of all species. The Red Knots and other seabirds which visit its shores and estuaries, the Eagles which fish and roost along the Chesapeake, and the state bird, the Baltimore Oriole, and its relatives which rely on the fields, forests, and farms throughout the western part of Maryland are facing ever greater challenges.

As we have developed natural areas, wildlife has struggled to keep up in many cases. Birds, however are incredibly resilient when provided with the correct resources. **Studies have found that bird species richness in a given area is greater where there is a healthy roadside environment.**ⁱ Roadside habitats are also important corridors for wildlife, connecting existing habitats and making safe passage and migration possible.

The neonicotinoid prohibition outlined in section 2(v) are of particular interest to American Bird Conservancy; they address the overwhelming problem of neonicotinoid insecticides negatively impacting wildlife when used as sprays, seed coatings, and on plants or seedlings purchased and installed in landscaping. **Every year, as many as 67 million birds are killed by pesticides.**ⁱⁱ Even more are lost when invertebrate prey they rely upon are killed by pesticide exposure or do not have adequate habitat.

SB0178 will not only enhance the natural beauty of Maryland, it has real economic benefits. **Wildlife-associated recreation brings over \$1 billion to the state annually,**ⁱⁱⁱ which will be bolstered by more wildlife-friendly



roadside habitats. SB0178's provisions would decrease the cost of roadside maintenance via reduced mowing, reduced herbicide use, and reduced future costs of habitat restoration or pollution clean-up.

American Bird Conservancy strongly supports SB0178 and urges favorable committee reports and cosponsorship of the bill.

With any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "E. Hardy Kern III". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "E" and "K".

E. Hardy Kern III
Director of Government Relations
American Bird Conservancy

ⁱ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0048969721065566>

ⁱⁱ https://www.fs.usda.gov/psw/publications/documents/psw_gtr191/psw_gtr191_1065-1070_mineau.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.parksandtrails.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Economy-Handout-web.pdf>