

Letter from Maryland Bee Clubs and Beekeepers re: SB375
Senate Education, Health and
Environmental Affairs Committee

February 10, 2021

IN SUPPORT SB375 Agriculture – Neonicotinoid Pesticides – Sales & Storage

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, Members of the Committee,

We, the undersigned, are beekeepers and beekeeping clubs in Maryland. We are writing to ask for your support in passing SB375, which will amend the Pollinator Protection Act to correct a loophole that is being used to allow some stores to sell consumer garden products containing bee-killing neonicotinoid pesticides to unsuspecting consumers. The Pollinator Protection Act makes it illegal for consumers to use these products, so they are unknowingly breaking the law when they buy and use them.

- In 2016, with wide bipartisan support, the Maryland General Assembly passed the Pollinator Protection Act to protect bees, wildlife and our food supply by prohibiting unnecessary consumer use of the most toxic pesticide for bees, neonicotinoids. At the time, Maryland had some of the highest bee losses in the nation.
- The latest Bee Informed Partnership survey of bee colony losses, 2019-2020, found nationally that we had the second highest losses in history at 44%. Summer losses, when bees should thrive, are the highest losses to summer populations ever recorded at 32%.
- While this is happening, over 100 Restricted Use Pesticide retailers, including forty Target stores, are using unclear bill language as a loophole to sell these products to consumers.
- Dennis Howard, former pesticide regulation manager at Md. Dept. of Agriculture was clear about the law in a 2018 *Bay Journal* article saying "...the law's language can be a little confusing, but it does prohibit sales to the general public of neonicotinoid pesticides for outdoor use... They [neonics] should be behind the counter for the folks [certified applicators] who can actually apply it under the legislation."

Clearly, this is not a time for weakening laws that protect honeybees and wild pollinators.

Education, Health & Environment Committee Vice Chair Kagan, along with Delegate Healey the original sponsor of the Pollinator Protection Act sponsor, are sponsoring SB375/HB208 to correct this loophole.

We ask you to pass SB375 to amend the Pollinator Protection Act and close the loophole so the bill will be protective of bees and implemented as it was intended. These chemicals are deadly to bees and should be restricted to certified pesticide applicators only. Please save our bees by passing SB375.

Respectfully submitted,
Steve McDaniel, McDaniel Honey Farm
mail@mcdanielhoneyfarm, 443-507-6367

On behalf of 304 Maryland Beekeepers,
Businesses/Apiaries and 8 Beekeeping Clubs
(listed next pages)

SB375 testimony signed by 304 Maryland beekeepers and 8 beekeeping clubs:

Name	Bee Clubs	Title	Email Address *	Phone Number
Steve McDaniel	Carroll County Beekeepers Association	Past President	mail@mcdanielhoneyfarm.com	(443) 507-6367
Ryan Smith	Anne Arundel Beekeepers Association	President	ryansmith@honeysmithbees.com	(443) 274-7496
Beth Sherring	Baltimore Backyard Beekeepers Network	Past President	bethsherring@gmail.com	410-215-5490
Christopher Hart	Central Maryland Beekeepers Association	President	president@centralmarylandbees.org	443-253-7510
Pam Hepp	Montgomery County Beekeepers Association	President	pphepp@aol.com	(202) 494-7934
Carla M Guarraia	Park School Beekeeping Club	Science Teacher and Club Mentor	cguarraia@parkschool.net	(1443) 413-5115
Michael Dashiell	South Cove Bee Club	Organizer	mikedash59@yahoo.com	(410) 812-5520
Mary Laura Fitzgerald	Upper Eastern Shore Beekeeping Association	President	themarylaura58@gmail.com	(301) 345-8171
Name	Apiaries, Businesses	Title	Email Address *	Phone Number
James Boicourt	Charm City Meadworks	Owner, Managing Partner	james@charmcitymeadworks.com	(410) 336-0459
Chris White	Bee-America	CEO	chris@3zs.us	(301) 229-2780
Bonnie Raindrop	Raindrop Apiary	Owner	legislate@centralMarylandbees.org	(410) 404-3808
Christina Glorioso Mullan	Monarchs Glen Apiary	Owner	monarchsglen@gmail.com	(301) 758-3400
Gerald Lutskus	Gerald's Bees	Owner	gjlcrcrt@icloud.com	(301) 529-8262
Kathryn Koenig	Koenig Apiary	Owner	kaykoenig1@gmail.com	(1301) 641-4189
Eric Malcolm	Backyard Apiaries LLC	Owner	backyardapiaries@gmail.com	(240) 602-7835
Richard Schwinger	Schwinger Apiary	Operator	schwinger@yahoo.com	(410) 489-5216
Gina Rosso	Home Apiary	Beekeeper	ginarosso@me.com	(443) 695-2673
John H. Mountcastle	Mountcastle Apiary	Beekeeper	Mtcstle@yahoo.com	443-794-7805
Mark Burchick	Burchick's Bees	Owner	MJBurchick@gmail.com	
Tim Phillips	Phillips Apiary	Homeowner	tphil13@gmail.com	(410) 493-6901
Hope Underwood	Underwood Apiary	Beekeeper	HopeUnderwood@hotmail.com	832-368-3395
Dianne E. Dunlap	Dianne's Apiary	Homeowner	diannedunlap2@gmail.com	(443) 742-9121
Kim Malinowski	Kim's Bees	Owner	Kimbastores@gmail.com	
Katherine Kight	Kight Apiary	Owner	kekight@gmail.com	410-5966244
Kent Phillips	Phillips Apiary	Apiary Owner	Kent.a.phillips@gmail.com	410-993-2804
Rene Iannuzzi	Rene's Bees	Beekeeper	Rianutz@gmail.com	
Stephen L Christianson	Christianson Apiary	Beekeeper	slcsr48@gmail.com	443 970 5316

Michael Patton	Home Apiary/Baltimore Co.	Beekeeper/Homeowner/Taxpayer/ Voter	Mdp1948@icloud.com	443-794-6553
Kenneth Lehman	Bee To The Apiary	Beekeeper	ibekenok@gmail.com	(410) 310-5948
Thomas Gargano	Thomas's Bees	Owner	Tomgargano1@gmail.com	646-773-1449
Sarah Rohbin	Rohbin Apiary	Owner	Sarah.Rohbin@gmail.com	
Victor Levi	Howard County Bee Club	Club Member	beekeeperlevi@gmail.com	
Merlowe Henry	Stone's Throw Apiary	Apiary Owner	merlowedee@gmail.com	(410) 365-2168
Michael Aaby	Michael's Bees	Owner	mcaaby@gmail.com	(240) 731-9352
Patricia Murphy	Murphy Apiary	Owner	dilirian@gmail.com	(1443) 248-4914
Mary Goff	Goff Apiary	Owner	mfrancesgoff61@gmail.com	(443) 812-0965
Kathryn Carr	Kathryn's Bees	Owner	carrkb3704@gmail.com	(410) 507-1402
Eric Thornton	Thornton Apiary	Operator	eric@thethorntons.com	
Nicholas Koutrelakos	Nick's Bees	Owner	Nicholas.koutrelakos@gmail.com	443-691-2575
Daneen Hatcher	Home Apiary	Beekeeper	dhatche2424@gmail.com	443-890-3042
Joan Orcutt	Orcutt Apiary	Owner	Joanorcutt@aol.com	(301)854-2447
Frank Berry	Berry Apiary	Owner	berrype@hotmail.com	410-461-2752
Ewa Turner	Turner Apiary	Owner	turnere@nih.gov	(410) 730-6185
Diane Dunn	Home Apiary - Bee Happy	Owner	diane.dunn3@verizon.net	410 730 9286
Lynn Hepak	Hepak Apiary	Owner	lynnhepak@hotmail.com	
Gary Pohlner	Chestnut Garth Apiary	Owner	g7pohlner@gmail.com	410-239-8844
Larry Fritz	DonLar Apiary	Owner, Operator	Lfritz45@gmail.com	410-804-7652
Larry A. Olmo	Olmo Bros Nursery & Farm	Farm Manager	larry@olmobros.com	(410) 703-5440
Russell Sprangel	Windsock Honey	Owner	Windsockhoney@gmail.com	(410) 241-8303
Frederick Smith	F&D Apiaries	Owner	F.smith@myactv.net	(301) 992-7197
Mary Gamper	Towson Run Apiaries	Beekeeper	Gamper.Mary@gmail.com	410 812 2676
Steven Roys	Lakeland Gardens	Owner	srroys58@gmail.com	443-996-6994
Emily Gannon	Gannon's Garden Apiary	Owner	emiliegannon@yahoo.com	(443) 760-8329
Karly Hansen	Chesapeake Queen Company	Operator	Karly.hansen@gmail.com	
Robin Stafford	Robin's Bees	Beekeeper	Robinnstafford@msn.com	(240) 423-9228
Matt Aust	Hidden Castles Apiary	Owner	Mattmanba99@hotmail.com	(443) 487-7886
Cory Heiges	HeigesHoneyBees	Owner	coryheiges503@gmail.com	(410) 596-2859
Jen McQueen	Rooted Bees	Owner	jenmcqueen8881@yahoo.com	
Dina Mundy	DM Bees	Owner	Dinamundy@gmail.com	240-405-4822
Douglas Hubbard	Hubbard Homestead Apiary	CEO	The3hubbards@gmail.com	301-943-6670
Lauren Lowe	Hickory Hill Apiary	Owner	Lalowe40@gmail.com	
Mikalena Lawrence	Mika's Apiary	Owner	mikalawrence@hotmail.com	919.604.1160
Amy Boldt	Barefoot Medicine Farm	Owner	Barefootboholive@gmail.com	

Richard Hill	Hill Apiary	Owner	richardhill2011@gmail.com	443-538-8898
Elizabeth Adkins	Pond View Apiary Jarrettsville	Owner	Lisamadkins@yahoo.com	(410) 382-8814
Andrea Langworthy	Banner Bee Co	Owner	Andrea@bannerbees.com	(240) 793-0363
Kathy Kadow	Kadow's Bees	Beekeeper	Kadow0420@AOL.com	410-292-7178
Bernie Kadow	Bernie's Bees	Beekeeper	kms214@aol.com	410-790-9270
Jp Boldt	Barefoot Medicine Farm	Co-Owner	jp.boldt@gmail.com	(202) 360-8642
Joanna Reed	Joanna's Bees	Beekeeper	jsreed99@gmail.com	443-487-1282
S. Weston Wolfe	Wolfe Apiary	Owner	s9wolfe@gmail.com	(443) 939-5545
Don Aker	Bizzy's Bees Apiary	Owner	Daker76259@verizon.net	(410) 371-5313
Ryan Smith	HoneySmith Bees	Owner	Ryansmith@honeysmithbees.com	(443) 274-7496
Kate Fisher	Bumbling Bee Apiary	Beekeeper	Katefisher13@gmail.com	
Joshua Cole	Cole Bee Company	Owner	Jcole57@live.com	(443) 974-8383
Mindy Dunnigan	M&M Apiary	Queen Beekeeper	mmdunni1281@gmail.com	(410) 876-2011
Kelly Brauning	Carroll Co Beekeepers Association	Beekeeper	Kelican89@gmail.com	443-289-1393
Olivia Canfield	Stoneberry Apiary	Owner	ocanfield@comcast.net	410-374-2375
Joanne Broccolino	Spring Lake Nature Bee Apiary	Owner	joannebroccolino@gmail.com	(443) 791-3363
Paul Alberti	Futurebeehobbiest	Hobbyist	Plalberti@comcast.net	
Pam Hepp	Kenwood Park Apiary	Owner	pphepp@aol.com	(202) 494-7934
Rick Wallace	Wallace Apiary	Owner	Rickcapsfan@yahoo.com	(443) 617-0182
Craig Teer	Teer Bees	Manager	craigbteer@aol.com	(240) 462-9008
Maureen Jais-Mick	Exfair Bees	Owner	jaismick1@verizon.net	
Sara Servin	Sara's Bees	Beekeeper in Training	sarafservin@gmail.com	
William Hahn	Bill with a B	Owner	wjh22@georgetown.edu	(646) 835-9100
Harris Elizabeth	Montgomery County Beekeepers Association	Member	ekmharris@gmail.com	(301) 529-9319
Elizabeth Harris	Studios Bees	Owner	EHarrisResearch@gmail.com	(301) 652-1872
Frank Mccowan	Honey Bunnys Honey	Owner	Mrfikser@verizon.net	(240) 994-4573
John Crissey & Susan Vogel	Lily Bee Honey Apiary	Owners	svj3enovo@gmail.com	(301) 408-8546
Carla Dinowitz	Beemish Bee Apiary	Ms.	carladinowitz@gmail.com	(301) 802-7364
Harold Keiner	Keiner's Apiary	Owner	hkeiner@pa.metrocast.net	
Leon Vandenberg	Farmer Lee Honey Co. LLC	President	farmerleesbees@verizon.net	240-595-7957
Gail Ifshin	Gail's Bees	Owner	gailifshin@gmail.com	(240) 338-4274
Richard Taylor Schulze	PappyRick'sHoney	Owner	rickschulze76@gmail.com	(301) 515-1034
Martin Posse	New Horizons Apiaries	Owner	mposse@newhorizonsapiaries.com	
Karen Kavanagh	Kavanagh's Bees	Owner & Manager	kckavanagh@yahoo.com	240-489-3219
Thomas Leo Soileau	Thomas Bees	Beekeeper	toso1234@yahoo.com	(301) 520-6150

John Casper	JC's Bees	Principal	johncasper33@gmail.com	(1419) 509-7452
Mark Whitnall	Wake Drive Apiary	Owner	markwhitnall@gmail.com	(301) 580-1862
Alice L Gambino	Alice's Garden & Apiary	Owner	alicelgambino@gmail.com	(1240) 519-7746
Barry Thompson	Estate and Orchard Beekeeping/Thompson Apiaries	Owner/Operator	BHT1113@aol.com	301-922-1810
Charlee Hardy	Brook Hollow Apiary	Beekeeper	chiadogs@gmail.com	
Steve Devore	Steve's Bees	Manager	Steven.m.devore@gmail.com	
Guy Semmes	Cinnamon Hill Apiaries	Owner	guy@hopkinsandporter.com	(301) 252-1868
Kim Malinowski	Howard County Beekeeper's Association	Member	Kimbastores@gmail.com	
Emily Johnson	Emily's Bay-Bees	Owner	emjohnson11.14@gmail.com	443-939-9296
Bradford S Luff	Luff Family Farms	Chief Beekeeper	Bradfordluff@verizon.net	(1443) 350-4732
William M Castro	Bee Friendly Apiary	Owner	billiam1969@beefriendlyapiary.com	(303) 877-4617
Erik Wallace	Goshen Farm Apiary	Head Beekeeper	erik.wallace@gmail.com	443-223-6230
Erik Darm	Darm's Bee Farm	Owner	erik.darm@gmail.com	(703) 946-0937
Sandra Taub	Kay's Bees	Beekeeper	lkhataub@gmail.com	(301) 439-0365
Jim Long	Bird Hill Farm	Farmer	jlong7774@gmail.com	(443) 745-3558
Dara Ritter	Kitty Corner Apiary	Owner	dararitter1111@gmail.com	(1301) 834-6447
Lacy Thomas	CMBA member	Beekeeper	Lacyleespencer@gmail.com	(410) 350-9265
Hilary Goulet	Anne Arundel Beekeeping Assoc	Beekeeper	hjpgoulet@gmail.com	(443) 758-7258
Suzanne Berger	Central Maryland Beekeepers Association	Beekeeper	Berger_suzanne@yahoo.com	443-220-9165
Anne W. Brown	Association of Southern Maryland Beekeepers	Little Brown Bees	awb@chesapeake.net	410-586-1321
Eric Mann	Howard County Beekeeper Association	Member	Eric.Ashton.mann@gmail.com	443-285-9745
Harry A Dalton	Dalton Farm	Owner	bee2charmer@gmail.com	
Lynne A. Ellis	Waverly Farms Bees	Owner	photofun4u2@gmail.com	410-337-0536
Karen Kavanagh	Kavanagh's Bees	Owner & Manager	kckavanagh@yahoo.com	240-489-3219
Emilia Waters	Waters Apiary	Owner	emilia620@yahoo.com	(410) 446-4172
Pat Ambrose	Ambrose Ranch and CMBA Member	Owner and Manager	patambrose99@gmail.com	(443) 255-0155
Selwin Gray	Hampton Honey	Apiary Owner	selwingray@gmail.com	(443) 794-8892
Vicki Rummel	Golden Girls Apiary	Owner	Goldengirlsapiary@gmail.com	410-925-9265
Edward Celarier	Dr. C's Bees	Owner	edward.celarier@gmail.com	(240) 620-3748
Dennis Wilson	Sparks Apiary	Owner	wilsondennisj@aol.com	
Lisa Reichenbach	Central Maryland Beekeepers Association and	Beekeeper, Psychologist, Voter	Lisacreichenbach@yahoo.com	410-240-1180

	owner of Hector's Hopyard Apiary			
Stephen Vaughn	Flying Pig Farm	Owner	Kiwini1@yahoo.com	410-829-9905
John Hebert	Woodsong Technologies	Owner	john.hebert@woodsongtechnologies.com	(1301) 578-6633
Carl Miller	Susquehanna Beekeepers	Beekeeper	carlmiller386@gmail.com	443-966-1539
Cynthia Friedel	CMBA	Member	cfriedel66@gmail.com	(410) 542-9628
Jennifer Beth Steeley	Beehaven 2	Owner	jenniferbeth60@gmail.com	(410) 253-3473
Erik Darm	Darm's Bee Farm	Owner	erik.darm@gmail.com	(703) 946-0937
Molly Moore	Association of Southern Maryland Beekeepers	Beekeeper	molly.moore@yahoo.com	(240) 393-0686
Tim Kaufman	Kaufman & Sons Apiary	Beekeeper	tsk680@yahoo.com	
Diane Wellons	Deezltownbeez.com	Owner	Deezltownbeez@gmail.com	(240) 925-1944
Ann Morrill	CMBA	Dr. / Beekeeper	Anncmorrill@gmail.com	(410) 963-8853
Diane Clark	Up on the Housetop Bees	Bee Encourager	fellowsdiane@gmail.com	(610) 334-5075
Michael Hurst	LeeDeeBee Honey	Owner	mdhurst@gmail.com	301-980-4183
Ashliegh Knox	Hexed	Beekeeper	Hexedhoneyfarm@gmail.com	410-236-7419
Aron Megyeri	Central Maryland Bees	Beekeeper	amegyeri@gmail.com	
Erik Nachbahr	Erik's Apiary	Beekeeper	enachbahr@heliontechnologies.com	(44) 360-7640
Jennifer Hecner	Hecner Farms	Owner/Operator	jhecner@gmail.com	(410) 245-6893
Luke Seeger	Seeg's Bees	President	Lseeger1@gmail.com	(443) 604-4032
Jill Matthew	Willowbee Bee Farm	Owner	Jill.p.matthew@gmail.com	(518) 859-4776
Maureen Connors	Central Maryland Beekeeper Association	Beekeeper	maureen.connors@hotmail.com	(443) 472-7834
Marci Lefevre	Montgomery County Beekeeping Association	Beekeeper	marcikay@icloud.com	(301) 277-4152
Julie Lokula	Southeast Apiary	Beekeeper	Julie.lokuta@gmail.com	646-642-7161
Brenda Klaunberg	Phunny Farm Apiary	Owner	bkshopsonline@icloud.com	(410) 507-2730
Christie Hash	Laughing Rabbit Apiary	Owner	chrishash13@gmail.com	(410) 692-5074
Therese Forbes	Honey Glow (Business)	President	therese@honey-glow.com	240-605-3189
Beth Wehrle	Beth's Bees	Owner	bethwehrle@gmail.com	202-262-0523
Stephanie Gold	Golds Bees	Beekeeper	rubysmom10@verizon.net	
Grady Banister	Anne Arundel	Beekeeper	molonlabe.gb@gmail.com	(443) 775-9309
Lucy Gooldy	Goshen Farm Apiary member	Member	Tgooldy@comcast.net	(1443) 994-6552
Elizabeth Lamb	Butterbee Farm	Field Manager	e.lamb92@gmail.com	(571) 274-1507
Larry Mcglinchey	CMBA	Beekeeper	larryapiper@gmail.com	(410) 560-2590
Brittany Llewellyn	MBK Apiary	Owner	bllewellyn88@hotmail.com	(301) 697-0054
Lillian Dote	Indigo Bees	Co-Owner	IndigoBees@yahoo.com	(215) 356-6777
Anthony Nerino	Indigo Bees	Co-Owner	toan953@gmail.com	(215) 356-2969

Beekeeper Letter in Support of SB375

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Jefferson Knapp	Knappcraft, LLC	President	jefferson@knappworks.com	(1410) 303-2253
Erik Darm	Darm's Bee Farm	Owner	erik.darm@gmail.com	(703) 946-0937
Steve Wilson	Central Maryland Beekeepers Association	Master Naturalist	swilson95713@gmail.com	(443) 864-2950
Amanda Griffin	JG Bees	Manager	abright.day8@gmail.com	
Peggy January	Central Maryland Beekeepers Assn.	Beekeeper	pjanuary2002@yahoo.com	410-374-2466
Monica Mooney	Bees on the Bay	Owner	Monica Mooney	(301) 456-5490
Judith Treible	City Line Apiary	Beekeeper	Jatreible@gmail.com	240-355-6914
Charles Green	Green Meadows Apiaries	Owner	cgreen326@gmail.com	301-748-5677
Stefan Holtz	MSBA	Beekeeper, Registered Voter	martiantimeslip@gmail.com	
Joshua Griffin	JG Bees	Owner	Joshuawgriffin@gmail.com	
Jill Matthew	Willowbee Bee Farm	Owner	Jill.p.matthew@gmail.com	(518) 859-4776
Gigi Shaffer	Gigi Shaffer apiary owner	Owner	gmscaff@gmail.com	301-539-1129
Gertrud Mergner	Montgomery County Beekeepers/Gertrud's Bees in Takoma Park	Beekeeper	gertrud.mergner@gmail.com	(1301) 202-7654
Richard Nuss	Backyard Bounty	Beekeeper	blue2max@aol.com	410 866 1893
Jonathan Hamaker	Central Maryland	Beekeeper	hamakerbeegle@gmail.com	
Janice Colvin	Colvin Farm Apiary	Owner and Beekeeper	janicecolvin123@yahoo.com	(410) 490-3389
Emily Anderson Brown	MD Queen Bee	Owner of MD Queen Bee	Emilyandersonbrown@gmail.com	(410) 591-6178
Ginger Chavis	Chavis Apiary	Chavis Apiary Owner	gingerchavis@gmail.com	(443) 883-0681
Cynthia Mackie	TarMac Bees	Independent Plant Ecologist	cmackie1223@gmail.com	(301) 588-1158
Bob Caffrey	Blenheim Fields Farm, Phoenix MD (CMBA bee club member)	Farm Owner	robert.t.caffrey@gmail.com	(240) 606-4652
Robert Justice	Bob's Bees	Owner	Bobjustice@aol.com	443 929 2180
John Turpin	Thorfin Apiaries llc	Owner	John@kvasirsfolly.com	(443) 848-6089
Bruce Perrygo	Bolton Apiary	Owner	bperrygo@md.metrocast.net	(301) 475-5894
Elizabeth Brown	Windy Hill Farm	Owner	davidandbethbrown@hotmail.com	(443) 244-5989
Kathleen Ross	Mayfield Apiary	Owner	brdgrrl@gmail.com	(443) 844-4256
Kay Dambach	Beth's Bees	Owner	kaydambach@gmail.com	410-703-8651
Benjamin Batten	Fiddlers Green Farm LLC	Operating Manager	bjamin.batten@gmail.com	(410) 259-3868
Joy Goode	Goode's Apiary	Owner	joygoode@verizon.net	410-218-9949
Mary Laura Fitzgerald	Turner's Creek Bees	Owner	Marylaura@turnerscreekbees.com	(301) 345-8171
Warren Klug	Goshen Farms Historic Society Apiary	Assistant Beekeeper	warrenklug21@yahoo.com	(781) 552-8759
Elizabeth Brown	Windy Hill Farm	Owner	davidandbethbrown@hotmail.com	(443) 244-5989
Shannon Snow	Snow's Baltimore Bees	Owner	shannon.e.snow@gmail.com	

Abigail Meckes	Home apiary	Beekeeper	abigail296@yahoo.com	
Kassie Shetler	Goshen Farm	Beekeeper	shetler098@yahoo.com	(240) 577-1670
Chris Gunther	Carroll County Beekeepers Association	Beekeeper	cgunther1@comcast.net	(1443) 340-8159
Jason Rubin	Susquehanna Beekeepers Association	Member, Former President	kabula46@verizon.net	410-978-1175
Lloyd Snyder	Snyder's Apiaries	Owner	SnydersApiaries@zoominternet.net	410-329-6671
Christopher L White	Backyard Beekeeper	Beekeeper	christopherwhitefin@gmail.com	
Jill Matthew	Willowbee Bee Farm	Owner	Jill.p.matthew@gmail.com	(518) 859-4776
Dillon Hale	Dillon's Raw Honey	Owner	h3dillon@yahoo.com	(443) 618-3818
Nicole Doenges	Howard County Beekeeping Association	Beekeeper	nikia226@gmail.com	(570) 575-7035
Sara Shaeffer	Let it Bee Apiary	Beekeeper	Saralshaeffer@yahoo.com	(410) 218-7477
Brian Richmond	Stonesong Awareness & Nature Center	Maryland Beekeeper	Brbizmail4@gmail.com	
Karen Bassarab	Baltimore County	Beekeeper	Karenobanks@gmail.com	
Jim Miller	Jim's Best Bees	Owner	j.j.m11l3r67@gmail	
Mark Kubik	Bearded Bee Boys	Managing Partner	Mark@beardedbeeboys.com	(719) 351-6992
Susan Bitter	Stony Ups & Downs Apiary	Manager	dbitter228@gmail.com	(410) 952-1743
Matthew Poulos	Federal Hill Honey	Co-owner	Mpoulos38@gmail.com	(301) 717-2024
Jack Wilson	Sassafras Environmental Education Center	Volunteer Coordinator/Beekeeper	jackkennedywilson@gmail.com	(443) 480-8608
Mimi Bennett	Really Raw Honey Company	Founder		(913) 702-5323
Frantz Walker	Really Raw Honey Company	Owner	frantz@reallyrawhoney.com	(410) 675-7233
Hartmut Doebel	George Washington University	Professor of Biology	hdoebel@gwu.edu	(202) 994-1045
Jean Hessenauer	CMBA	Beekeeper	greendog24@comcast.net	(410) 343-3647
Robert Stanhope	Central Maryland Beekeepers Association	Beekeeper, former Vice President	stanhopes@verizon.net	(410) 472-9269
Charles Smith	Smith's Apiaries	Owner	dan.smith.07.23.1998@gmail.com	(301) 491-1089
Patricia Wong	The Back Corner Apiary	Beekeeper	PattiWong12@gmail.com	(240) 543-6224
David J Dunaway	Grady's Walk Apiary	Manager	davejutta@aol.com	(301) 928-6504
Beth Sherring	Bee-Squared Apiaries	Owner	Bethsherring@gmail.com	(410) 444-6635
Henry Lingenfelder	Bee-Squared Apiaries	Owner	Bethsherring@gmail.com	(410) 444-6635

Jutta Dunaway	BUMBA	Beekeeper	kasseljutta@aol.com	(301) 464-1093
VK Holtzendorf	Red Top Farm	Beekeeper	vkay@comcast.net	(240) 463-1510
Edwin Berkinshaw		Beekeeper	berkinshaw@gmail.com	443-994-8884
Martin Porter	Puddlebee bees	Manager	martin@clarksalesllc.com	443-463-5502
Ennan Guan	Biologics & BoNT Consulting	Founder	ennanguan54@gmail.com	240-780-8104
Ellen M Breidenbaugh	5 Bees Honey LLC	Owner	ellen@acsindustrial.com	410-472-4620
Megan W Carlson	Central MD Bee Association	Beekeeper	mwcarslson4@verizon.net	410-382-1191
Harry N Dutcher	Paradise Honey	Beekeeper	bspaboy@comcast.net	410-734-9236
Steven Dannenfelser		Beekeeper	swdjoppa@gmail.com	410-688-9127
Janine Bennett-Mohamed	BUMBA	Beekeeper	kjdmoe@aol.com	301-661-7771
Douglas Howard	Susquehanna Beekeepers Association	Co-owner	suzukizone@yahoo.com	443-652-7595
Amy Rembold	Personal apiary	Beekeeper	Mcrembold@icloud.com	
Susan Beckius	Susquehanna Beekeepers	Member	S.beckius@yahoo.com	610-613-3906
Michael Stinnett	Susquehanna Bee Keepers	Bee Keeper	mstinnett@zoominternet.net	443-206-2078
John M Kovac	John's Bee Yard	CEO	johnkovac@verizon.net	443-243-0519
Ann Breitenbach	Beekeepers	Co owner apiary	zoyalb@hotmail.com	
Carol M Hatem	Susquehanna Beekeepers	Beekeeper	plinsky12@yahoo.com	
Robert L Crickenberger	Crickenberger Apiary	Beekeeper	cricks24@comcast.net	443-243-5136
Paul Harry Hoey		Beekeeper	hoey.paul@aol.com	410-687-8535
Rita M Kryglik	Kryglik Apiary	Owner	rkryglik@gmail.com	410-967-4094
Jane Kuhl	Lumina Honey & Hive Products	Owner	dentons@verizon.net	410-588-5686
Malcolm Denton	Lumina Honey & Hive	Beekeeper	dentons@bverizon.net	410-588-5686
Michael Schulz	Schulz Farm Apiary	Owner	mfschulz26@gmail.com	301-442-2753
Cheryl Evry	BUMBA and MSBA	Beekeeper	caevry@gmail.com	
Robert Crouse	Maryland State Beekeepers & Susquehanna Beekeepers	Beekeeper	rlcrouse@qis.net	410-638-0105
Alan Watts	Greenspring Bees	Beekeeper	fleetliner14@comcast.net	443-610-3208
Amanda Tejada	Member Susquehanna Beekeepers	Beekeeper	mandee.tejada@gmail.com	443-616-4247
Sarah Wheelan	SJB Apiary	Owner	swheelan@gmail.com	
Jan Mooney	Upper Fells Point Improvement Association Community Garden	Committee Chair	communitygarden@upperfellspoint.org	410-493-0158
Carey Marzicola	Susquehanna Bee Keepers	Concerned citizen	littlebalue@gmail.com	443-243-8243

Renee Howard	Susquehanna Bee Association	Beekeeper	reneeh947@yahoo.com	443-677-3019
Pam & Jack Geraghty	Geraghty Apiary	Owner	p.g.geraghty@comcast.net	410-652-5607
Laura Kabernagel	Susquehanna Bee Association	Beekeeper	laurakabernagel@aol.com	410-459-2206
Helen French	Laurel Apiary	Beekeeper	hfrench@gmail.com	202-421-6924
John Toscani	Susquehanna Beekeepers	John's Bees	Johntoscani425@verizon.net	410-322-4647
Elizabeth Bratkowski	Hippie Chick & Bee Farm	Beekeeper	outdoorfreak@verizon.net	410-960-1385
Yvonne Wagner	Wagner Farm	Beekeeper	Wagneryvonne29@gmAil.com	443-417-0993
Blake de Kozlowski	High Flyin' Hives	Owner	bdekoz27@gmail.com	410-982-3568
Laura Peregoy	Susquehanna Bee club	Beekeeper	nuhorizon58@yahoo.com	410-877-5393
John Flanagan	Flanagan's Bees	Owner	jjflan.flanagan@gmail.com	410-920-1445
William Lee Hall	Susquehanna Beekeepers	owner	bhall42@verizon.net	410-734-6467
Bill Morgan	Willy's Apiary	Beekeeper	Rwwilly62@verizon.net	
Andrew Hammond	Hammonds Apiary	Beekeeper/Owner Operators	Chickwich@yahoo.com	443-504-4683
Renee Hammond	Hammonds Apiary	Manager	Steelefans3@yahoo.com	443-876-3642
Michael Hader	Holly's Honey Apiary	Manager	Hollyshoneyapiary@yahoo.com	540-538-8823
Thomas Pearson	Howard County Bee Keepers	Member	Tspearson@yahoo.com	410-207-6502
Pamela Mauk	Susquehanna Beekeepers	Member	pamela.mauk@yahoo.com	410-456-7088
Daniel P Mauk	Susquehanna Beekeepers	Member	crabber9167@yahoo.com	410-452-9133
Gary Appel	Ree's Bees Apiary	Owner	garyappel33@gmail.com	410-937-1977
Lynn Breiner	Beesweet Apiary	Beekeeper	lynnbreiner@gmail.com	
Amanda Arbour	Mother of Pollinators	Owner/manager	aarbour.ic@gmail.com	401-996-9270
Brenda Kinzinger	Susquehanna Bee Keepers	Beekeeper	bkinzing@gmail.com	443-415-6517
Janet Steinbach	Deep Run	Beekeeper	Janetsteinbach51@gmail.com	443 340-1426
Kevin Daly	Kevin Daly	Chair	kdaly@ctbaltimore.org	
Suzanne Toomey	Carroll Cty Bees	Beekeeper	setoomey@gmail.com	410-549-2643
Brad Moore	Moore's Bees	Owner	please pss HB208 to amend the Pollinator Protection Act	
Kirsty Carrihill-Knoll	Baltimore City Bees	Beekeeper	kcarrihill@yahoo.com	
Louise Wright	BeemoreKind Apiary	Beekeeper	Louiserw@gmail.com,	410-254-3174
Bonny Wright	Keeper's Craft Apiary	owner	bw55@me.com	
Chris Smith	Mt. Washington Farmhouse Apiary	Beekeeper	Christopherksmith87@gmail.com	
Anne Bailliere	Amateur Gardeners' Club	Beekeeper	abailiere@comcast.net	
Susan Warner	Central Maryland Beekeepers and Susquehanna Beekeepers	Associate Professor of Biology	scwarner@hotmail.com	443-5199-527

Nancy Berger	Baltimore bee club	Volunteer	Trail4miles@gmail.com	410-785-7581
Melissa Crumpton	Melissa's Bee	Owner	robinsonjmelissa@gmail.com	410-913-2847
Hilles Whedbee	Central Maryland Beekeepers Association	Nurse Midwife, Beekeeper	hwedbee@gmail.com	
Barry Miller	Barry's Bees	Owner	bmiller@barrymiller.us	410-266-6959
Luke Goembel	Central Maryland Beekeepers Association	Vice President	idylukewild@yahoo.com	
Hannah Byron	St. George's Garden Club	Chair, Conservation Committee	Hannahbyron@comcast.net	410-736-1185
Jean Hessenauer	Central Maryland Beekeepers Association	Beekeeper	Greendog24@comcast.net	410-343-3647
Sondra Novo	Central Maryland Beekeepers Association	Hospitality Coordinator	sondra1205@gmail.com	410 218 0673
Mary Batten	Fiddlers Green LLC	Owner	battenml@yahoo.com	907-350-0451
Nicole Yakas	Working Girls Apiary	Owner	Nikinic@gmail.com	443-562-0821
Andrew J McWilliams	Andys Dandies llc	CEO	Andysdandiesllc@gmail.com	301-884-0937
S. Weston Wolfe	Stellurian Apiary	CDR, USN (Ret)	s9wolfe@gmail.com	443-939-5545
Yangyi Chen	Fernhouse Apiary	Owner	Yangyic@gmail.com	
Wendy Albert	St. George's Garden Club	Horticulture Chair	ratlines@comcast.net	
Richard Ochs	Central Maryland Beekeepers Association	Beekeeper	rjochs@comcast.net	(443) 846-6638
Brenda Jackson	Central Maryland Beekeepers Association	Beekeeper	brendajack@gmail.com	410-667-1505
Harry Jackson	Central Maryland Beekeepers Association	Beekeeper	jackson.harry@gmail.com	410-302-1210
John Lowe	Hickory Hill	Assistant Beekeeper	Jlowe@carrollk12.org	410 751 5341
Bill Castro	Bee Friendly Apiary	Owner/apiarist	Billiam1969@beefriendlyapiary.com	303-877-4617