

Maryland Senate
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
22 January 2024

Dear Sirs and Madams,

SB 278, § 5, involves beekeeping. This bill was probably drafted with the intention of having all beekeepers registered, but it may well have the opposite effect. This would be tragic, because all beekeepers understand the communications that take place both within and between hives and the ability for one diseased hive to endanger its neighboring hives. I suggest that you encourage the desired registration by positive measures, though, not by punitive ones.

I had bees from 1990 till 2020. Twenty-nine of those 30 years were in Maryland, in Calvert County. In the earliest years an inspector tried to annually visit every apiary in the state. It was exciting when he came because he always had tips on how I could improve my hives. He came because I was registered, without my even asking. No registration, no helpful advice. Then some recession or another came along and the inspections all but stopped for a while. Cybil Preston does an incredible job now, but she needs help. Please consider increasing her staff so that at least everyone who requests an inspection will always have one. That is not the case now.

If the State advertised and provided inspections instead of fines, it would be beneficial to everyone. Add an inspector to the budget instead of paying for dunning letters and unnecessary legislation. Why should one register his bees if forgetting to do so results in a fine? From a practical point of view, you would be lucky to locate a fraction of the unregistered bees who don't want to be found. There is nothing like a speed camera or a bloodhound which will find the offenders. Even those of us who have always been registered try to keep our hives hidden from the public so as not to be an attractive nuisance to juvenile (or mature) delinquents.

Keeping bees was one of the great joys of my life. If I could lift hives at the age of 80 the way I could at 45, I would still be doing it and would be able to bribe each of you with a jar of Little Brown Bee honey.

Thank you for your consideration.

Anne W. Brown
438 Swan Court, Chestertown, MD 21620
443-282-0821 awb@chesapeake.net