



Testimony in Opposition of SB 278 Department of Agriculture - Licensing, Registration, Fees and Penalties, and Regulation

January 23, 2023

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

**Submitted by: Smart on Pesticides Coalition of 114 organizations and businesses
and 53 Maryland Beekeepers who signed on to this testimony.**

Position: Oppose

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, Members of the Committee:

The Smart on Pesticides Coalition of 114 organizations and businesses, and the undersigned beekeepers ask for your opposition to SB278 "Department of Agriculture - Licensing, Registration, Fee and Penalties, and Regulation" bill, specifically section 5-503 pgs 3-4 concerning beekeeping penalties. **This is an unnecessary and unwarranted action that does not serve the beekeeping community.**

This is what the reality of this poorly thought out piece of legislation looks like for both commercial and hobbyist level beekeepers and how it could effect them.

Maryland beekeepers are already besieged by the heavy financial costs of long-term high honeybee losses in Maryland. Once again, **Maryland losses were reported by the national [Bee Informed Project at 48.47%](#). This is consistent with losses nearing 50% hive mortality year after year for more than a decade.** SB278 seeks to add to these beekeeper financial woes by setting financial penalties for beekeepers who are late or choose not to register their bee colonies, or who choose to manage hives that do not comply with MDA's mandate for moveable hive frames.

The loss of a single honeybee hive is calculated at \$2000. This number is based on a healthy hive producing an average of 90 lbs of honey, sold at \$15/lb = \$1350. Beekeepers split healthy hives in the spring to make new "nucleus" or "nuc" colonies and an average of 2 or more starter nuc colonies can be made. Nucs are a hive product that sells for \$200 or more. Costs to feed a new or replacement nuc hive and treating mites are additional. Therefore, the loss of income is approximately \$2000 for each dead hive.

Furthermore, dead hives must be replaced and significant labor through the year is needed to build them to the level where they can produce a honey crop the following spring—this constitutes many hours of labor on the part of the beekeeper to feed the new hive and manage it, without income to pay for these labor hours. This is not calculated in the above figure.

MDA states: **Maryland beekeeping is critical to Maryland agriculture and crops valued at over \$40 million** will require and benefit from honey bee pollination in the state. MDA cites [1,800 beekeepers who keep 14,000 colonies](#) annually. With 50% mortality, Maryland beekeepers are sustaining losses of \$1,400,000 each year! How many other businesses that are crucial to Maryland's largest industry, agriculture, would be needlessly penalized while sustaining these kinds of losses?

Due to these hard financial realities, **Maryland loses beekeepers at an astounding rate**; some bee clubs calculate this at nearly 50% a year. The numbers are only marginally static (if we believe MDA's numbers, which haven't changed on its webpage in 10 years) because the public is so concerned and enthralled by honeybees that there has been a consistent churn of new hobby beekeepers coming into the industry each year. They unfortunately often quit in defeat after a few years of recurring hive losses.

This bill puts the Dept of Agriculture in an adversarial position with small business owning beekeepers who are already sustaining huge losses due largely to no fault of their own. These losses track to the increased use of neonicotinoid and other pesticides and resulting consequences of bee health impacts and morbidity –



poisoned habitat, increased susceptibility to pest and pathogens, impaired reproductivity – all worsened by pesticides that are ubiquitous in the environment and beekeepers have no way of protecting their colonies from this constant poisoning exposure.

One might say, if they are law abiding what does it matter? But imagine being late and being fined for your 10 hives for \$25 or \$50 each--that's \$250 or \$500. Beekeepers operate their apiaries as commercial or sideline businesses and hobbies, and beekeeping takes much more time due to colony loss impacts; it is easy to imagine annual paperwork being filed late and penalties and fines becoming one more reason to throw in the towel on beekeeping. Some beekeepers are experimenting with different hive configurations to find ways to increase survival and the health of their bees. They should be fined?

This law would be another step in changing what has historically been a goodwill partnership for around 70 years between MDA and beekeepers into a more adversarial one. Why is this needed now?

Please oppose bill SB 278 —specifically section 5-503 pgs 3-4 concerning beekeeping penalties— which adds an unfair unnecessary burden to Maryland’s beleaguered beekeepers.

Thank you,

Bonnie Raindrop,
Coordinator, [Smart on Pesticides Coalition](#) of 114 organization and businesses

And the undersigned 53 Maryland beekeepers:

Andrew Hammond, Aqueduct Abbey Apiary, Beekeeper, chickwich@yahoo.com
Anne W. Brown, Maryland State Beekeepers Assoc., Member beekeeper, 1990-2020, awb@chesapeake.net
Chad David Cover, Beekmore Apiary, Beekeeper, TreeKeeper & Taxpayer, beekmoreapiary@gmail.com
Dave Dobbs, Big Bee Apiary, Master Beekeeper/Owner, dobbsda@gmail.com
David Aker, Bizzy Bee, Beekeeper, david.aker4@gmail.com
Don Aker, Carroll County Beekeepers, Member, daker76259@verizon.net
Douglas Howard, Susquehanna Beekkeepers Assoc., Member, suzukizone@yahoo.com
Duane Economos, Economos home, retired, economosmick@gmail.com
Edward Celarier, Dr. C's Bees, Backyard beekeeper, edward.celarier@gmail.com
Edwin Berkinshaw, Dr. B's Bees, President, berkinshaw@gmail.com
Erik Nachbahr, Sugabee Apiary, Owner, enachbahr@heliontechnologies.com
Erik Wallace, Central Maryland Beekeepers Assoc., Member, erik.wallace@gmail.com
Estelle M Aker, Carroll County Beekeepers, Member, emaker1116@gmail.com
Francis Stepanek, Bee Peaceful, Owner, motrteknik@aol.com
Frank McCowan, Montgomery Co. Beekeepers Assoc., Owner, mrfikser@verizon.net
Gary Appel, Ree's Bees apiary, Beekeeper, garyappel33@gmail.com
Gigi Shaffer, Hobby beekeeper, gmshaff@gmail.com
Gina Rosso, Applebee Honey, backyard beekeeper, ginarosso@me.com
Ginger Chavis, Beekeeper/Educator, gingerchavis@gmail.com
Harlee Valentine, Bizzy Bee, Beekeeper, harleelynn49@icloud.com
Hilles Whedbee, Central Maryland Beekeepers Association Member, Owner, Shawan Farms, hwhedbee@gmail.com
James Boicourt, Charm City Meadworks, Owner, james@charmcitymeadworks.com
Jennifer Kalmanson, Bee Lover, jenny_kalmanson@hotmail.com

Jennifer Steeley, Steele Beehaven, Beekeeper, jenniferbeth60@gmail.com
Joanna Reed, Frizzellbees Apiary, Owner, jsreed99@gmail.com
John Hebert, Individual (hobby beekeeper), Beekeeper, jgheber@gmail.com
Kathleen Virginia Ross, Central Maryland Beekeepers Association, Member, Brdgrrl@gmail.com
Kathryn Carr, Residential, Owner, carrkb3704@gmail.com
Kenneth Lehman, A Ferndale Beekeeper, Head Beekeeper, ibekenok@gmail.com
Kristine Gavrilis, Member of Central Maryland Beekeepers Association, Beekeeper, kristine_g@comcast.net
Lisa Reichenbach, Central Maryland Beekeepers Association Member, Backyard beekeeper, lisacreichenbach@yahoo.com
Louise Wright, Baltimore City Beekeepers, Central Maryland Beekeepers, Member, lousierw@gmail.com
Lynn Hepak, Back yard beekeeper, hobbyist beekeeper, lynnhepak@hotmail.com
Mandee Tejada, Former member of Susquehanna beekeepers club, mandee.tejada@gmail.com
Mark Burchick Jr, Howard County, mjburchick@gmail.com
Martin Knight, Central Maryland Beekeeping Association Member, mfpknight@yahoo.com
Maureen Connors, Central Maryland Beekeepers Association Member, Ms., maureen.m.connors@gmail.com
Maxx Hurkamp, Maryland Beekeepers, Quality Manager, maxxhurkanp@gmail.com
Merlowe Henry, Stone's Throw Apiary, Owner, merlowedee@gmail.com
Nancy Berger, Central MD Beekeeping Association Member, trail4miles@gmail.com
Pam Geraghty, Susquehanna Beekeeping Association Member, Beekeeper, p.g.geraghty@comcast.net
Renee Howard, Susquehanna Beekeeping Association Member, reeneh947@yahoo.com
Richard Wallace, Montgomery County Beekeepers, Mr., rickcapsfan@yahoo.com
Rita Kryglik, Susquehanna Beekeepers Association, NA, rkryglik@gmail.com
Sara Shaeffer, Howard County Beekeepers Association/Let it Bee Apiary, saralshaeffer@yahoo.com
Sarah Rohbin, Howard County Beekeepers Association, sarahjrohm@gmail.com
Serena Black Martin, Venture Farms 1918, President, serenamartin@mac.com
Susan Bitter, Central Maryland Beekeepers Member, sdbitter228@gmail.com
Susan Wolfe, CMBA Member, USN (Ret), s9wolfe@gmail.com
Thomas Soileau, Montgomery County Beekeepers, Beekeeper, toso1234@yahoo.com
Victor Kulynych, Vics Angry Bees, Backyard beekeeper, victorkulynych@gmail.com
Wesley Villatoro, Bizzy Bees, Keeper, wsly_vlltr@comcast.net
William Castro, Bee Friendly Apiary, owner, billiam1969@beefriendlyapiary.com