

Testimony from Linda Ebersole, 910 Israel Creek Court, Knoxville, Washington County, MD 21758

I come before you today to request permanent funding in the State of Maryland Operating Budget for the Department of Agriculture, Nuisance Insects Program for FY 25 and beyond. This request is for consistent funding and treatment for “biting” black flies in southern Washington County, Maryland, along the Potomac River from Williamsport to Brunswick, MD. Please note that this entire area is adjacent to Virginia and West Virginia and involves the quality of outdoor life for four counties (Washington, Frederick, Loudoun, and Jefferson).

In August 2017, a pilot program was initiated and found to be extremely effective. Maryland House Bill 1353, Agriculture, Nuisance Insects, was put into place on October 1, 2019, with the stipulation that counties and municipalities that wanted to participate must agree to pay 50% of the cost. I have a financial background in the Federal Government and have repeatedly suggested repeatedly that the State of Maryland and Washington County should not be the only bill payers for this program because two additional states and three counties are reaping the benefit of the State of Maryland and Washington County funding. I urge you once again to get this resolved.

Treatments are absolutely needed monthly before the first hatch of black flies which is typically mid-April through the first hard frost in November. The flow of the Potomac River also affects cost—high water requires more *Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis* (Bti) versus dry seasons. Neighboring Pennsylvania has a large and extremely successful program that has been in place since 1983 and Maryland could be successful as well with consistency of funding and treatments. Since inception, we have had three treatments in FY 18, one in FY 19 (no additional funding was available), four in FY 20, none in FY 21 (no funding due to Covid-19), two in FY 22, five in FY 23, none so far in FY 24, and I see where the Department of Legislative Services recommends for this program to be deleted. In the big scheme of things, this is a drop in the Operating Budget and this recommendation has been made without input from the citizens. Clearly, they have

not had to endure the swarms of biting black flies that leave painful, itchy welts. These welts take weeks to heal. No outdoor activities can be enjoyed peacefully due to the swarms of black flies. We need this program funded consistently because Bti will not eradicate the black flies, but it decreases the numbers to allow for pleasant tourism, business, recreational activities, and/or gardening/yardwork in our beautiful area.

I truly appreciate the opportunity to represent the citizens of southern Washington County. Please support us and reinstate this funding permanently.

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Pictures included for visual measures two residents have taken:



A neighbor on Garretts Mill Road has come up with a self-made sticky hat so that when the black flies swarm around his head and land, they can't fly away, bite or get in his eyes. And yes, the hat was bright blue construction paper, but now has black flies stuck all over it.



Measures my now 90-year-old Mom has gone to mowing with apparel and coverings to keep from getting bitten by the black flies that leave welts that swell and itch for days/weeks. Some folks have reported almost allergic-type reaction to the bites. Please note it is 91 degrees and she must cover as much of her exposed skin as possible.