



## Testimony in Support of HB022 Agriculture – Pollinator Habitat Plan – Requirements for State Highway Administration

February 7, 2023

Committee: Environment and Transportation

Submitted by: Smart on Pesticides Coalition of 114 organizations and businesses including 23 Maryland beekeepers who signed on in support.

Position: In Support of HB022

Chair, Vice Chair and Members of the Committee:

We represent a coalition of 114 organizations and businesses, including 7 beekeeping clubs plus a group of beekeepers who have signed on to this testimony.

Maryland's bees and wild insect pollinators are *still* in serious trouble, and so are beekeepers as a result of unsustainable continuing honeybee losses. One of the **measures we have of how bad insect pollinators are declining in Maryland** is through the Bee Informed Partnership's annual survey of managed honeybee hive losses. [Maryland losses for 2022-23 were reported at 48.47%](#) by Bee Informed's latest survey. Worse, Maryland's **bee losses have hovered near 50% hive mortality year after year for more than a decade** – 10% losses are the threshold for maintaining sustainable managed bees. But wild pollinators, who provide the largest part of pollination services, are more vulnerable because many are dependent on specific cultivars or native plants for food.

All of these **pollinators provide a vital role in our food security**: Maryland's Dept. of Agriculture states on its website that **pollination is needed for crops valued at over \$400 million in our state**.

Managed honeybees are "the canaries in the coal mine" for many other critically important pollinating species, insect and bird alike. **Bird advocates report similar alarming declines in bird species**.

HB022 takes a crucial step forward by building upon Maryland's 2017 Pollinator Habitat Law by increasing pesticide-free forage and safe native species habitat along our state's roadways. This will benefit Maryland's more than 400 insect pollinators and bird species, while reestablishing key native plant species, which will in turn benefit the health of crops, forests, and ecosystems. The bill also wisely directs the agency to investigate federal programs and other sources of funding to help accomplish this very needed restoration.

A favorable vote for this bill **takes a crucial step toward aiding hundreds of declining pollinating species, including our state's beleaguered honeybees, the health of Maryland ecosystems, and ultimately will protect our food supply**.

Please support HB022 with a favorable vote.

Thank you,

Bonnie Raindrop,

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*(Beekeeper signers, next page)*

**We, the undersigned 23 Maryland beekeepers support SB178:**

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