



## **SB0178 – Agriculture – Pollinator Habitat Plan – Requirements for State Highway Administration**

### **Testimony before the Maryland Senate Committee for Finance**

**January 31, 2024**

**Position: Favorable**

Ms. Chair, Ms. Vice Chair and members of the committee, my name is Michael Loll, and I represent the 700+ members of Indivisible Howard County. We provide written testimony today in strong support of SB 178, which requires the State Highway Administration (SHA) to expand roadside pollinator habitat and make significant improvements to its current pollinator conservation program.

Declining pollinator species have been documented throughout the world (<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2021/08/210816112104.htm>). With pesticide use and climate change, habitat loss is cited as one of the major causes of pollinator destruction. In response to this problem the Maryland General Assembly passed HB 132 in 2016 and HB 830 in 2017 to use public lands for pollinator habitat enhancement.

Unfortunately, despite the state's best efforts, pollinator decline in Maryland and the United States has only accelerated. Therefore, SB 178 is now introduced:

- To ramp up roadside habitat expansion at a faster rate
- To provide more maintenance for said habitat
- To provide outreach and educational opportunities for communities impacted by roadside pollinator habitat. This may involve working with community associations and updating educational information about pollinators on the SHA and other state government websites.
- To mandate that the SHA tracks and evaluates federal funding for pollinator habitats, native plants, and invasive species control to fund some of these efforts.

It may be necessary to spend money initially to set up additional habitat, but in the long term it is expected that these areas will need less mowing and pesticides, thereby reducing long term maintenance costs.

Thank you for your time and attention.

**We encourage a favorable report.**

Michael Loll  
Columbia, MD

