

SB932 - Pesticide and Pest Control - State-Owned P

Uploaded by: Dave Arndt

Position: FAV

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment
Testimony on: SB932 - Pesticide and Pest Control - State-Owned Property
- Pesticide Use Restrictions and Pollinator Habitat
Submitting: Dave Arndt
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: Feb. 18, 2025

Dear Mr. Chair and Committee Members:

Thank you for reading my testimony today in strong support of SB932, the Pesticide and Pest Control - State-Owned Property - Pesticide Use Restrictions and Pollinator Habitat.

We depend on bees to pollinate 70 of the 100 crops that provide 90% of our food, but bees are fighting an uphill battle of pervasive pesticide use and colony collapse. Over all, bees are already facing record losses, we are seeing Colony Collapse Disorder decimate 40% of hives all over Maryland. Also troubling is the collapse of the monarch butterfly with the population dropping by 59% over the last year.

One of the main culprits is a group of toxic pesticides called neonics that attack bees' brains, paralyzing and ultimately killing them. Ending the worst uses of bee-killing pesticides can help protect pollinators.

Fortunately, we know how to help them: protecting already-existing bee habitat, expanding habitat by planting pollinator-friendly plants on public lands, and ending the worst uses of the pesticides that are killing them. One of the main culprits is a group of toxic pesticides called neonicotinoids that attack bees' brains, paralyzing and ultimately killing them. Ending the worst uses of bee-killing pesticides can help protect pollinators. Incidentally, these pesticides have negative effects on humans and our pets, including neurological problems, reproductive issues, and cancer.

This bill is a great first step in saving our bees and other pollinators. It requires the Department of Agriculture to develop a model pesticide and pollinator habitat management plan to be implemented on State-owned and managed property. It also designates that at least 20% of the unencumbered land may not be treated by any aesthetic pesticide. And when practicable, prioritize the use of native plants to create habitats for key pollinators.

Together, we can save the bees and pollinators.

For all of these reasons, I strongly support SB932 and urge a **FAVORABLE** report.
Thank you,

Dave Arndt
Co-Chair Maryland Legislative Coalition – Climate Justice Wing

SB932 FAV Dorothy Broadman.pdf

Uploaded by: Dorothy Broadman

Position: FAV

SB932; Pesticide and Pest Control - State-Owned Property - Pesticide Use Restrictions and Pollinator Habitat

Dear Education, Energy and Environment Committee,

I am writing in favor of SB932, "Pesticide and Pest Control - State-Owned Property - Pesticide Use Restrictions and Pollinator Habitat". Its narrow focus seems to be a minimum approach.

I am writing as an individual representing myself only. I am active in removing non-native invasive plants as a Montgomery County Level II Weed Warrior. I am also actively gardening with native plants at home and am a member of our local chapter of Wild Ones.

The harmful effects of pesticides (including herbicides, insecticides and fungicides) have been heavily studied and documented. These negative effects include serious health impacts and damage to wildlife (plants and animals) beyond those intended. Barring their use for aesthetic reasons is low-hanging fruit for addressing this problem. The exemptions should eliminate, or at least minimize opposition.

Adding pollinator gardens are desperately needed if we are to rebuild our severely depleted ecosystem. The massive amount of lawns and non-native plantings, the rapid spread of invasive plants, and the extremely small amount of native plants are the causes. Again the provision to add 20% pollinator space is low-hanging fruit to address this serious problem.

Please vote favorably and pass this important bill through committee.

Thank-you for considering my testimony.

Dorothy Broadman
Montgomery County Level II Weed Warrior
Member, Wild Ones Nation's Capital Chapter

SB932_Sierra Club_FAV 18Feb2025.pdf

Uploaded by: Judith Fulton

Position: FAV



P.O. Box 278
Riverdale, MD 20738

Committee: Education, Energy and Environment

Testimony on: SB932 Pesticide and Pest Control – State-Owned Property – Pesticide Use Restrictions and Pollinator Habitat

Position: Support

Hearing Date: February 18, 2025

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club supports SB932 because of its benefits to people, pollinators, other wildlife, and native plants.

Native plant pollinator habitats are expressly planted for the purpose of supporting our Maryland ecosystems and our agriculture. Excessive use of pesticides is one of the primary culprits in the global biodiversity crisis.¹ For example, within Maryland, there are 28 bee species that are rare, threatened, or endangered according to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, including the rusty-patched bumble bee.²

Many Americans are also aware of the stunning decline in our beloved Monarch butterflies, whose populations have dropped more than 80%.³ While loss of habitat is part of the cause, pesticide usage is another significant contributor to the decline.

Native plants are the keystone food for much of our wildlife, including existentially important native pollinators. Of the 100 crop species that supply 90% of human nutrition, over 70 require bee pollination.⁴ Many of our important crops rely on native bees, including squash, pumpkins, tomatoes, blueberries, cranberries, and sunflowers. According to the United States Geological Survey (USGS), in almost all crops, native bees are the primary pollinator, or they significantly supplement the activity of European honeybees.⁵

It makes sense for the Department of Agriculture to develop a model pesticide and pollinator habitat management plan to be implemented on State-owned and managed property, and to restrict application of those pesticides to qualified individuals. It is crucial that pesticide usage does not undermine public health or efforts to support native plants and pollinator habitats in Maryland.

We respectfully request a favorable report for SB932.

Marie LaPorte
and Judy Fulton
Natural Places Committee
marielaporte@verizon.net

Josh Tulkin
Chapter Director
Josh.Tulkin@MDSierra.org

1 Brondizio, J. et al. IPBES (2019): Global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3831673>

2 Maryland Department of Natural Resources, List of Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Animals of Maryland, November, 2023. https://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Documents/rte_Animal_List.pdf

3 Xerces Eastern Monarch Conservation <https://xerces.org/monarchs/eastern-monarch-conservation#:~:text=Monarch%20butterflies%20east%20of%20the,needed%20for%20the%20monarch's%20survival.>

4 Humans Must Change Behaviour to Save Bees, Vital for Food Production, March 10, 2011, United Nations UN News, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2011/03/368622>

5 USGS, What is the role of native bees in the United States? April 19, 2024 <https://www.usgs.gov/faqs/what-role-native-bees-united-states>

Testimony 2025 - SB0932 Pesticide and Pest Control

Uploaded by: Mary Gant

Position: FAV

**Senate Bill SB0932, Pesticide and Pest Control - State-Owned
Property - Pesticide Use Restrictions and Pollinator Habitat**

Education, Energy, & Environment Committee – February 18, 2025

SUPPORT

Thank you for accepting written testimony from Kids for Saving Earth (KSE), an organization devoted to providing educational materials, posters and a website featuring environmental educational curriculum and activities for teachers, parents, and children. Our goal is to make the environment safer and healthier for children.

Reducing exposure to toxic chemicals is essential to human health and well-being and to protecting our environment. Our pollinators are especially vulnerable to a range of toxic substances and need increased protection now and in the future. Our children and pets have additional exposure to pesticides as they walk and play in areas contaminated with pesticides.

SB0932 provides a sensible plan to manage the use of pesticides on state owned property.

Kids for Saving Earth strongly supports a favorable Committee report and passage in the Senate.

SB0932 Written Testimony (cover letter).pdf

Uploaded by: Senator Karen Lewis Young

Position: FWA



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Annapolis Office
James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 302
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3575
800-492-7122 Ext. 3575
Karen.Young@senate.state.md.us

District Office
253 East Church Street
Frederick, MD 21701
301-662-8520

The Honorable Brian Feldman
The Honorable Cheryl Kagan
Education, Energy, & Environment Committee
Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

February 18th, 2025

**SB0932 - Pesticide and Pest Control - State Owned Property - Pesticide Use
Restrictions and Pollinator Habitat**

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and distinguished members of the Committee,

Senate Bill 932: Pesticide and Pest Control - State-Owned Property - Pesticide Use Restrictions and Pollinator Habitat will protect the pollinators critical to Maryland's ecosystem by limiting their potential exposure to dangerous pesticides and increasing their access to healthy native habitats.

This bill:

- 1) Eliminates the usage of pesticides on state-owned land unless the pesticide is a "Listed Pesticide."
 - a) A "Listed Pesticide" is a pesticide wherein the active ingredients are recommended by the National Organic Standards Board and published on the National List, or a pesticide designated as a "Minimum Risk Pesticide" under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, And Rodenticide Act or;
 - b) is a "Registered Pesticide". A "Registered Pesticide" is an EPA-approved pesticide only for a specific use or application amount such as controlling invasive species.
- 2) Requires the Department of Natural Resources to develop a plan prohibiting the use of pesticides on 20% of state-owned and managed property. This plan will include and implement best practices for restoration and maintenance of pollinator habitats.

Pesticide contamination is nearly unavoidable in Maryland and across the United States. Since 2007, bee populations have decreased by 80%. Research shows that over 90% of pollen samples¹ from bee hives are contaminated with pesticides, often a pesticide cocktail. The average pollen sample contained six different pesticides - one sample had 31 in a single pollen sample, with wax samples containing up to 39 different pesticides². Even when individual pesticides aren't toxic, the combination of different pesticides can have deadly effects. The Department of Agriculture reports that, "crops valued in excess of \$40 million require or benefit from honey bee pollination in the State³." Pollinators are critical to the health of our ecosystem, the sustainability of our food chain, and our economic well-being.

Reducing and limiting use of pesticides leads to a healthier environment. Senate Bill 932 was modeled off of a piece of Montgomery County legislation implemented in large part due to public health concerns. Pesticides inherently contain toxins, many of which are detrimental to human health. Pesticide exposure has been linked to serious conditions in children including pediatric cancers, decreased cognitive function, and behavioral problems such as ADHD. In adults, pesticide exposure has been connected to cases of Parkinson's disease, diabetes, leukemia, lymphoma, lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, dementia, reproductive dysfunction, Alzheimer's disease, and a variety of cancers⁴. An essential part of this legislation will increase safe places for Maryland families to enjoy the outdoors.

This bill also requires the creation and implementation of a Pesticide and Pollinator Habitat Management Plan. The model Pesticide and Pollinator Habitat Management Plan will:

- 1) Designate at least 20% of the unencumbered land as area that may not be treated by any aesthetic pesticide;
- 2) Prohibit the use of any pesticide known to be toxic to pollinators, even if the pesticide is a Listed Pesticide, unless the appropriate Secretary determines that the use is necessary to respond to a specific instance of threat to public health; and
- 3) When practicable, prioritize the use of native plants to create habitats for key pollinators.

After developing the model, the State will collaborate with the managers of state land to meet the specific needs of each state owned tract. While we coordinate technical aspects of this bill with our partners in the Departments of Agriculture and Natural Resources, we are all in agreement that in order to protect Maryland's pollinators, ecosystems, and human health we must

¹ Mullin, Christopher A., et al. "High Levels of Miticides and Agrochemicals in North American Apiaries: Implications for Honey Bee Health." *PLoS ONE*, vol. 5, no. 3, 19 Mar. 2010, p. e9754, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2841636/, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0009754>.

² Frazier, M., et al., What have pesticides got to do with it? *American Bee Journal*, 2008. 148(6): p. 521-523.

³ Department of Agriculture. "Apiary Inspection." *Maryland Department of Agriculture*, mda.maryland.gov/plants-pests/pages/apiary_inspection.aspx.

⁴ Montgomery County, Department of Environmental Protection. "Purpose of Pesticide Lawn, Organic Lawns, Montgomery County, MD Government." *Montgomerycountymd.gov*, www.montgomerycountymd.gov/DEP/property-care/lawns/law/law-purpose.html.

decrease the widespread use of pesticides. Last year the Maryland General Assembly passed SB178, Pollinator Habitat Plan Requirements for the State Highway Administration. This bill continues that important work and makes Maryland a healthier place for all.

I respectfully urge a favorable report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Karen Lewis Young". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Senator Karen Lewis Young

2025-SB 932-Pesticide Use Restrictions and Pollina

Uploaded by: Seth Grimes

Position: FWA

SB 932 – FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS
Pesticide and Pest Control - State-Owned Property - Pesticide Use
Restrictions and Pollinator Habitat
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

February 18, 2025

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Committee Members,

I support SB 932 with a request for amendments.

This bill would deliver incremental but significant environmental and public-health gains by tightening rules for pesticide application on certain public lands and by requiring the development and adaptation of model pesticide and pollinator habitat management plans.

The bill's modification of § 5–1103 of the Agriculture article should be amended: a) to require timely implementation of the required pesticide and pollinator habitat management plans – the sponsors and cognizant committees should determine dates by which adapted plans should be implemented for each state-owned property and b) to require plan-development and implementation reporting, for each individual tract of state-owned property, and c) the § 5–1102 allowance for meeting a local requirement and the § 5–1103 exception for actions respecting inconsistent with a local requirement should be removed.

As a member of the Takoma Park City Council, I wrote the city's Safe Grow Act of 2013, restricting cosmetic lawncare application of synthetic chemical pesticides, and with Safe Grow Montgomery, I helped win enactment of Montgomery County's similar 2014 Healthy Lawns Act. SB 932 is legislation developed in the spirit of those bills.

SB 932 would allow, on state-owned property, application of organic and "minimum risk" pesticides and of a "registered pesticide" applied against weeds, invasives, noxious species, and in agriculture. It requires development of "a model pesticide and pollinator habitat management plan to be implemented on state-owned and managed property," with a number of positive provisions.

SB 932 would deliver incremental but significant environmental and public-health gains and would be strengthened by the amendments I have suggested.

I ask that you amend SB 932 and vote a favorable committee reading of the amended version.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Seth Grimes

7300 Willow Avenue
Takoma Park, MD 20912

25 DMAA SB932 StatePesticide.pdf

Uploaded by: Lindsay Thompson

Position: UNF

Senate Bill 932 - Pesticide and Pest Control - State-Owned Property - Pesticide Use Restrictions and Pollinator Habitat

Committee: Education, Energy and the Environment

DMAA Position: **Opposed**

Delaware-Maryland Agribusiness Association (DMAA) Position on Senate Bill 932

The Delaware-Maryland Agribusiness Association (DMAA) represents agricultural retailers and manufacturers operating in Maryland. DMAA opposes Senate Bill 932 which would restrict the types of pesticides that can be applied to all state property for specific purposes and require the designation of certain state lands as pollinator habitat that would further restrict pesticide use.

The Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act which has been in place for over 70 years creates the federal framework for pesticide evaluation and regulation at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Pesticides are required to undergo a rigorous evaluation for initial registration and be re-evaluated at least every 15 years or when new information becomes available.

The EPA evaluation for registration includes risk assessments that evaluate the potential for:

- Harm to humans, wildlife, fish, and plants, including endangered species and other non-target organisms.
- Contamination of surface water or ground water from leaching, runoff, and spray drift.¹

The process evaluates the ingredients of the pesticide;

- the particular site or crop where it is to be used;
- the amount, frequency, and timing of its use; and
- storage and disposal practices.

EPA has conducted specific evaluations for pollinators on several different classes of insecticides.

This risk assessment includes:

- Feeding studies, which examine effects on colonies following exposures to known concentrations of a pesticide in a food source fed to a bee colony.
- Semi-field studies, which examine effects on colonies contained within enclosures.
- Residue studies intended to quantify pesticide concentrations in pollen and nectar of crops treated according to the labels.

As a result, EPA has adopted pollinator specific labeled directions on certain pesticide labels that include time of use restrictions, restrictions on application to flowering plants, among others. The label is the law and applicators must follow the pesticide label which EPA has determined to be sufficiently protective of pollinators.

Additionally, Maryland has published a Managed Pollinator Protection plan that addresses pesticide use in relation to pollinators. The pesticide section reads as follows:

“Pesticides are one of many tools available to manage lawn and garden pests. When using pesticides follow the label directions exactly -- the label is the law. Before using any pesticide on lawns or gardens:

- Identify the pest and assess the damage. Many plants can tolerate insect damage and no action may be necessary. The UMD Extension offices and Home and Garden Information

- Center can help identify insect damage or disease (<https://extension.umd.edu/hgic>).
- If pest damage is extensive, explore and understand options for management. Choose methods that minimize harmful effects on pollinators and beneficial insects that prey on pests.
 - Avoid applying insecticides to flowering plants or to areas where pollinators may be nesting.”

The recommendation is not to restrict labeled uses of registered pesticides or to utilize organic pesticides only on pollinator habitat.

This legislation sets a precedent that organic pesticides in their entirety are somehow less toxic to pollinators than other registered pesticides that have undergone specific risk assessments by EPA.

DMAA holds that the Maryland Departments of Agriculture and Natural Resources should have the authority to determine how pesticides can best be used in relation to pollinators.

1. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. *Pesticide Registration Process*.
<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/about-pesticide-registration>

MDFB - Opposition - SB932 State-Owned Property - P

Uploaded by: Tyler Hough

Position: UNF



Maryland Farm Bureau

3358 Davidsonville Road | Davidsonville, MD 21035
410-922-3426 | www.mdfarmbureau.com

February 14, 2025

To: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

RE: Opposition of SB932 - Pesticide and Pest Control - State-Owned Property - Pesticide Use Restrictions and Pollinator Habitat

On behalf of the nearly 8,000 member families of the Maryland Farm Bureau, I submit written testimony in opposition to SB932 Pesticide and Pest Control - State-Owned Property - Pesticide Use Restrictions and Pollinator Habitat. This proposed legislation establishes pesticide use restrictions and pollinator habitat management on state-owned property in Maryland.

This legislation may not have a significant immediate impact on those currently leasing state land for agriculture. However, it sets a concerning precedent regarding pesticide regulations within the state. By restricting and eliminating pesticide use on state-owned land except for specific, necessary circumstances, this policy could serve as a steppingstone toward a broader, more comprehensive ban on pesticide use across the entire state.

If such restrictions continue to expand, farmers and agricultural businesses may face increased challenges in managing pests and maintaining crop yields. A broader ban on pesticide use could lead to higher production costs, lower efficiency, and potential impacts on food supply and pricing. While environmental and public health concerns are important considerations, it is crucial to find a balanced approach that supports both sustainability and the agricultural industry's ability to thrive.

Maryland Farm Bureau respectfully opposes SB932 and urges an unfavorable report.

Sincerely,

Tyler Hough
Director of Government Relations

Please reach out to Tyler Hough, though@marylandfb.org, with any questions

MD SB 932 ACC Testimony_Feb 18_INF.pdf

Uploaded by: Anastasia Swearingen

Position: INFO

Testimony: Anastasia Swearingen, Senior Director, Chemical Products & Technology, American Chemistry Council

RE: MD SB 932, Pesticide and Pest Control - State-Owned Property - Pesticide Use Restrictions and Pollinator Habitat

Position: Informational, Potential Amendments

The American Chemistry Council appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 932, which restricts the application of pesticides on State-owned property. The American Chemistry Council Center for Biocide Chemistries (CBC) represents registrants and formulators of antimicrobial pesticides. These products are registered by the State of Maryland as pesticides and serve important roles in addressing public health, preserving products, and helping to ensure the safety and sustainability of industrial processes. Antimicrobials include disinfectants, sanitizers, wood preservative chemistries, antifouling paints, and household product preservatives.

ACC CBC seeks clarification as to whether antimicrobial pesticides are intended to be within the scope of this legislation. The application of antimicrobials, such as disinfectants and sanitizers, are critical to helping control disease-causing microbes and helping prevent the spread of sickness. For example, this could prevent the use of disinfectants in state-owned bathrooms.

As written, the bill defines a pesticide in a manner that would include antimicrobial pesticides. Pesticide is defined as products that used to "prevent, destroy, or mitigate any pest." The bill includes a separate definition of a registered pesticide, which includes "a pesticide registered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and labeled for use in lawn, garden, or ornamental sites or areas in accordance with the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act" (FIFRA). Antimicrobial pesticides are registered by the U.S. EPA and labeled for uses in areas in accordance with FIFRA. Finally, the bill includes a definition of "listed pesticide" which requires the active ingredients in listed pesticides be recommended by the National Organic Standards Board or designated as a "minimum risk pesticide."

The bill states that a person may apply a pesticide on state-owned property only if the person is applying either a listed pesticide (which would not include most antimicrobials), or a registered pesticide for certain conditions (that do not include antimicrobial uses). It also requires that the applicator notify the Department of the pesticide application and the reason for use within 30 days. ACC notes that there is no provision expressly written in the bill that clearly allows the application of antimicrobial pesticides registered by EPA without notification to the Department.

ACC appreciates clarification from the sponsor as to the intent and scope of the pesticides covered under the bill. We are not aware of any pollinator concerns from antimicrobial pesticide application and use on state property.

ACC suggests that the sponsor amend the bill to explicitly address these concerns or offer further clarification and assurance to stakeholders that antimicrobial pesticides are not included within the scope of the bill.

SB0932_DNR_LOI_Bill Report_2-18-25.pdf

Uploaded by: Emily Wilson

Position: INFO



Wes Moore, Governor
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor
Josh Kurtz, Secretary
David Goshorn, Deputy Secretary

February 18, 2025

BILL NUMBER: Senate Bill – 932 – First Reader

SHORT TITLE: Pesticide and Pest Control - State-Owned Property - Pesticide Use Restrictions and Pollinator Habitat

DEPARTMENT’S POSITION: LETTER OF INFORMATION

EXPLANATION OF DEPARTMENT’S POSITION

DNR appreciates the intent of the proposed legislation to bolster pollinator populations and protect their habitats on state-owned lands, as it aligns with the department’s ongoing efforts to restore natural ecosystems and provide opportunities for pollinators to flourish. However, several significant challenges are identified in the proposed language that could hinder its effectiveness and create significant operational and fiscal impacts.

As drafted, the proposed language regarding pesticides raises concerns about the practical and timely ability to address emerging invasive species issues on state-owned properties.

The Department would be happy to continue conversations with the sponsors and the Department of Agriculture toward a mutually agreeable resolution.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A primary concern revolves around the practical implementation of the bill. The requirement for individual pollinator plans for *each tract* of land, while well-intentioned, presents a significant logistical hurdle. The volume of work involved with plan development for each individual tract of DNR-owned property would strain resources and require additional Natural Resource Planner IIIs (Grade 16/Step 5 = \$65,657 annually) for each land managing unit and require several years to complete. It is noted that many of the bill's objectives are already addressed by existing Sustainable Forestry certifications, and many land units already have robust Best Management Practices (BMPs) or Integrated Management Plans (IMPs) in place, perhaps leading to some redundancy of effort. Finally, DNR already has in place a Pollinator Habitat Plan for the conservation of pollinators and pollinator habitat on DNR lands for the benefit of Maryland’s citizens (https://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/documents/pollinatorhabitatplan_june2017.pdf).

Also noted are some ambiguities in the bill's language that could lead to operational challenges and unintended consequences. The definitions of "aesthetic pesticide" and "invasive species," for example, require further clarification. The current definition of "invasive species" excludes certain native species that can be highly invasive and damaging in specific contexts. Expanding the definition to read ‘non-native invasive species

Contact: Emily Wilson, Director, Legislative and Constituent Services (Acting)
emilyh.wilson@maryland.gov ♦ 410-260-8426 (office) ♦ 443-223-1176 (cell)

and native species exhibiting context-specific opportunistic behavior' would alleviate this concern. Similarly, the restriction on indoor pest control to areas "around or near the foundation of a building" is impractical for the diverse range of state-owned structures, including barns, storage facilities, and other outbuildings where more targeted efforts may be necessary. These definitional issues warrant careful attention to ensure the legislation achieves its intended goals.

Furthermore, the proposed restrictions on pesticide use, while aimed at protecting pollinators, could inadvertently harm them and other valuable species. The blanket 20% restriction on chemical applications within each tract, regardless of the specific ecological context, is overly rigid and could hamper effective management of invasive species and the preservation of valuable trees and successful establishment of early successional flowering plants. The broad prohibition on pesticides "known to be toxic to pollinators" also raises concerns, and the authority charged with making that determination is unclear. This could potentially ban nearly all pesticides, including those essential for controlling invasive species and protecting vulnerable ecosystems. A more nuanced approach, focusing on targeted restrictions and promoting integrated pest management strategies, would likely be more effective. Depending on the bill's implementation on state-owned properties leased out for agricultural operations, significant additional fiscal impacts may be sustained.

BILL EXPLANATION

This bill restricts pesticide use on state property to specific pesticides and purposes. It mandates the Department of Agriculture to create a model pesticide and pollinator habitat management plan, which each managing unit of state government must adapt for their specific tracts of land.

SB0932 - SHA - LOI - Pesticide and Pest Control -

Uploaded by: Patricia Westervelt

Position: INFO

February 18, 2025

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman
Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Miller Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

***RE: Letter of Information – SB 932 – Pesticide and Pest Control – State-Owned Property –
Pesticide use Restrictions and Pollinator Habitat***

Dear Chair Feldman and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) takes no position on Senate Bill 932 but offers the following information for the Committee's consideration.

Senate Bill 932 authorizes a person to apply a pesticide on State-owned property only if the person is applying a listed pesticide or a registered pesticide for specified purposes; requires the Department of Agriculture to develop a model pesticide and pollinator habitat management plan to be implemented on State-owned and managed property; and requires a State government unit that manages tracts of State-owned property to work with the Department to adapt the model plan which would prohibit the application of commonly used pesticides on portions of the rights of ways. The bill defines pesticides as any chemical used to control pests, including pesticides, insecticides, and herbicides.

If enacted, this legislation would have a large fiscal impact on Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) maintenance operations, an estimated additional \$2,500,000. Due to SHA's enhanced focus on litter and mowing, SHA maintenance forces use herbicides as a vegetation management tool. SHA crews must prioritize vegetation management in some areas to address sight distance and drainage issues. Having fewer options to manage vegetation overgrowth will cause a drop in the SHA's ability to deliver service, as well as an increase in costs to keep the level of service as high as possible. Additionally, more hand mowing will result in increased exposure of workers to traffic, presenting increased safety risk for employees. Finally, SHA coordinates with the Department of Agriculture on herbicide application for statewide management of invasive species plants, particularly in areas where invasive species negatively impact farmland. SHA's ability to manage invasive species propagation would likely be negatively impacted with limitations on herbicide use.

In addition, it should be noted that the State Highway Administration already has its own pollinator plan and is expanding its pollinator habitats on Maryland rights of way. The State Highway Administration was recently awarded \$150,000 through the [Roadside Pollinators Program](#) that will enable the department to enhance the [SHA Pollinator Plan](#); adopt pollinator-

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman
Page Two

friendly best management practice related to maintenance and operations in designated areas; develop and install roadside signs identifying established roadside meadows; and create eight roadside or median pollinator meadows in five counties across the state with a goal of constructing nearly eight additional acres of crucial pollinator habitat.

The Maryland State Highway Administration takes a balanced approach to state right of ways. In order to balance operational demands across multiple needs, such as maintaining levels of service, managing invasive species and supporting pollinator habitats, SHA must have the tools to manage all demands effectively.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee consider this information during deliberations of Senate Bill 932.

Respectfully submitted,

April King
Acting Director
Office of Government Affairs
Maryland State Highway Administration
410-210-5780

Matthew Mickler
Director
Office of Government Affairs
Maryland Department of Transportation
410-865-1090