

March 5, 2025

The Honorable Marc Korman
Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee
251 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Letter of Information – HB 1342 – 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 House Bill 1342 but offers the following information for the Committee's consideration.

House Bill 1342 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-

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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 House Bill 1342.

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