

Testimony in Support of HB 1342
Pesticide and Pest Control - State-Owned Property - Pesticide Use Restrictions and
Pollinator Habitat

Presented to the Environment and Transportation Committee

March 5, 2025

FAVORABLE

Free State PTA (FSPTA) represents over 70,000 volunteer members and families in over 500 public schools. As the state's premier and largest child advocacy organization, Free State PTA is a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families, schools and communities, and a strong advocate for public education. We are here to ask for a **favorable report for House Bill 1342.**

This bill requires the creation of an environmentally and ecologically oriented model plan to restrict pesticides and protect pollinator habitats on portions of state land and property in Maryland. Upon reading this bill, I reflect on how nature strikes a balance on its own, as I witnessed as a child in my own backyard and the wilds of my hometown. There was a diverse population of insects and pollinators. I was unaware of how harmful chemical pesticides were because the notion of insects and animals as pests didn't exist. For example, lady bugs were a natural repellent to the aphids in my parent's flower garden, and both naturally existed together in abundance. We hear far too often news of the threats to our natural habitat, including extinction facing pollinator habitats, in our greater "backyard" here in Maryland.

This bill is a welcome and necessary step in the preservation, restoration, regeneration, and protection of our natural lands, by restricting, limiting, and supplanting chemical pesticides. We applaud the efforts to find better alternatives for management of the ecosystem that exists on state properties. Development of a model plan and goals to adapt the plan are a step in the right direction. Our hope is that counties in Maryland can learn from these efforts and follow suit.

Bills such as this one are vitally important to protect the pollinator species and populations that exist in Maryland. Honeybees, for example, not only produce honey and beeswax, but also pollinate nearly 40% of the food that we eat, including some \$40 million of Maryland's crops. Due to the shortage of bees, Maryland farmers rent 5,000 colonies each year. Further, there are many Maryland educational institutions who can benefit from awareness of a model pesticide and pollinator habitat management plan, such as The Maryland Green Schools Program, Environmental Education Award Program, The University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, Maryland Outdoor Learning Partnership, and Maryland Envirothon.

Please kindly consider this testimony in your deliberations and support HB1342.

Testimony is presented on behalf of
Mickie Chandra, Advocacy committee member and
Gerrod Tyler, President
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