

Mid-Atlantic

An affiliate of the
American Soybean Assn.

We represent the industry in Maryland,
Delaware, Pennsylvania & New Jersey

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February 2, 2026

Subject: HB0091 - Agriculture - Neonicotinoid Pesticides - Prohibitions

To: Environment & Transportation Committee

Position: Opposed

On behalf of the Mid-Atlantic Soybean Association (MASA), I am sharing opposition to HB0091 – Agriculture – Neonicotinoid Pesticides – Prohibitions.

Banning neonicotinoid seed treatments for soybeans and other commodities would be taking away a vital tool allowing Maryland farmers to protect crops from pests and while establishing climate smart practices to protect Maryland's land and waters. Neonicotinoids, often called "neonics", provide safe, targeted protection from pests that target seeds and seedlings pre-emergence. Such seed treatments have proven to safely reduce the total volume of pesticides throughout the growing season by protecting the crop in such a vulnerable stage of growth rather than broad spraying after damage has already occurred.

Maryland's grain sector for soybeans, corn, and small grains operates within a regional seed market. Most hybrid and treated seeds are distributed at the regional and national level, not tailor-made for a small state market. A recent survey conducted by the American Soybean Association found that 90% of soybean acres in the survey were planted with treated seed, 66% of which was treated with insecticide. A prohibition on selling or using neonic-treated seed will severely limit availability of competitively priced seed options for Maryland producers. Seed has already been purchased for the fall of 2026 and will not be readily available for spring of 2027 and beyond.

The reality of pest pressures that farmers face expose the risk of HB91. Seed treatments are meant to be applied during the early stages of the soybean's life cycle for a couple of reasons. First, the early application helps to protect seeds and young plants when they are the most susceptible to pest damage. Pest pressure can typically be higher early in the growing season as soil and air temperatures warm, triggering life cycles for not only freshly planted soybeans in the ground, but also insects that feed on newly germinated seedlings. Neonicotinoid seed treatments protect seeds from pests in the soil that farmers do not know are present until it is too late and have reported experiencing 30-50% pre-emergent loss. Non-treated soybeans account for most of the replanted acres in Maryland which can cost farmers \$30-50 per acre in seed cost alone. A 2020 Cornell study concluded that neonics "consistently increase net income, reduce crop damage, or provide superior pest control compared to likely substitutes" for farmers. Removing neonic seed treatments would force farmers to rely on antiquated pest control options and potentially threaten their ability to implement conservation practices.

MASA ... protecting the interests of soybean farmer-members in the Mid-Atlantic region.

Second, the early use of seed treatment applications helps minimize the ecological impacts of pesticides on surrounding environments and species. Seed treatments reduce the volume and frequency of total pesticide applications while providing the timeliest protection for soybean seedlings at their most vulnerable stage of development. Furthermore, subsoil applications generally have reduced ecological effects relative to other application types. Inherently, seed treatments are a mitigating application method to reducing pollinator exposure. If you remove these technologies, you erode integrated pest management (IPM) protocols, which could leave applicators to address pest pressures with more antiquated chemistries that require other application methods, or greater application frequency and amounts. Banning the use of neonics forces the use of older classes of insecticides, and every pound of neonics would be replaced with nearly 5 pounds of organophosphates. Less effective products require more spraying of insecticides. In addition to significantly increased spraying, loss of neonics in the pest management rotation accelerates the development of resistance - harming our agriculture industry and environment.

Neonics remain approved for use at the federal level by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The EPA has been engaged in multi-year biological evaluations of neonicotinoids, including their effects on endangered species, pollinators and critical habitats as part of the Endangered Species Act process. EPA released updated pollinator risk assessments and proposed interim decisions in January 2020 as part of its ongoing neonicotinoid registration review any changes to allowed use should respect and align with that federal process rather than preempt it.

Respectfully submitted,

Danielle Bauer
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Mid-Atlantic Soybean Association