

February 2, 2026

Committee: House Environment and Transportation Committee

Bill: HB 0091 – Agriculture - Neonicotinoid Pesticides - Prohibitions

Position: Support

Testimony of American Bird Conservancy in Support of HB 0091

On behalf of American Bird Conservancy (ABC) and our members across Maryland, I am writing to express our strong support for **HB 0091**, which seeks to protect Maryland's birds, pollinators, and aquatic ecosystems by prohibiting the use of neonicotinoid-treated seeds and the cosmetic application of these pesticides on outdoor ornamental plants and turf.

The Avian Crisis and Neonicotinoids

North America has lost nearly **3 billion birds** since 1970, a staggering 29% decline in our bird populations. Neonicotinoids, a class of neurotoxic insecticides, are a primary driver of this loss. These chemicals are not only lethal to the bees that pollinate our crops but are devastating to the birds that form the backbone of Maryland's natural heritage.

A single corn seed treated with a neonicotinoid is enough to kill a songbird. Even at sub-lethal doses, these pesticides cause significant harm:

- **Migration Disruption:** Exposed birds suffer from rapid weight loss and disorientation, delaying their ability to migrate and decreasing their chances of survival.
- **Reproductive Failure:** Neonicotinoids interfere with the development of healthy chicks and the ability of adult birds to reproduce effectively.
- **Food Source Depletion:** By decimating insect populations, these pesticides eliminate the primary food source for 96% of North American land birds during the nesting season.

Treated Seeds: A Massive Source of Contamination

Treated seeds are one of the most significant sources of neonicotinoid contamination in our environment. When these seeds are planted, only a small fraction of the pesticide is absorbed by the plant; the remaining **90-95%** stays in the soil or leaches into Maryland's waterways, including the Chesapeake Bay. This persistent contamination poisons the entire food web, from soil invertebrates to aquatic insects and the birds that rely on them.

Economic and Ecological Benefits of Birds

Birds are not just beautiful; they are an economic engine for Maryland. Bird watching and wildlife tourism generate over **\$450 million** in annual economic activity for the state.

Furthermore, birds provide essential ecosystem services, including natural pest control for our farmers and pollination for our native flora.

The Myth of Necessity: Yield vs. Environment

Critical to the discussion of this bill is the mounting evidence that these treatments are often unnecessary. **Extensive independent research, including studies from the EPA, has consistently shown that neonicotinoid seed treatments provide no significant increase in crop yields compared to non-treated seeds.** We are essentially poisoning our landscape and our avian populations for a perceived benefit that does not materialize in the harvest.

HB 0091 is a common-sense measure that aligns Maryland with leading scientific recommendations. By removing neonicotinoids from non-essential ornamental use and addressing the massive scale of treated seed use, Maryland will take a critical step toward reversing bird population declines and protecting the health of the Chesapeake Bay and ourselves.

American Bird Conservancy respectfully urges a FAVORABLE report on HB 0091.

Sincerely,



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