

February 2, 2025

Committee: Environment and Transportation Committee

Bill: HB91 – An Act Concerning Agriculture – Neonicotinoid Pesticides – Prohibitions

Position: Favorable

Dear Committee Chair, Vice-Chair, and Committee Members:

I request you issue a favorable report on the bill HB91—An Act Concerning Agriculture—Neonicotinoid Pesticides—Prohibition. I am a bird watcher and have been concerned about the effects of neonicotinoids for many years. This bill would ban distribution, sale, and use of corn, soybean, or wheat seeds coated with neonicotinoid pesticides.

Such coated seeds are poisonous to birds. A single coated seed can kill a bird the size of a Blue Jay. Exposed seeds pose a grave danger to any seed-eating bird, with seed spills presenting an aggravated danger. The neonicotinoid on the coating moves into the seedling and will spread to the entire plant. This presents a further danger to birds, and pollinators as well. At sublethal levels, neonicotinoids can cause weight loss, lowered fat reserves, and disorientation among sparrows. They can also lead to nest failure.

Both birds and insect pollinators are in steep decline. A landmark report in 2019 showed that the United States lost nearly 1/3 of its birds since 1970. Insects such as butterflies, moths, bumble bees, and beetles have also been shown to suffer steep declines.

Maryland banned the retail sale of neonicotinoids in 2015. Unfortunately, the use of neonicotinoid coated seeds continue to deposit them in our environment to the detriment of our birds and insect pollinators. It is my hope that we can expand the prohibition on neonicotinoids to agricultural seeds. I urge the committee to issue a favorable report.

Kurt R. Schwarz

Columbia, Maryland