



February 4, 2025

The Honorable Marc Korman, Chair  
House Environment and Transportation Committee

**Re: House Bill 91 – Agriculture – Neonicotinoid Pesticides – Prohibitions**

Position: **Oppose**

Chair Korman & Committee Members:

On behalf of the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts (MASCD) I am writing to express our **opposition** to **House Bill 91 Agriculture – Neonicotinoid Pesticides – Prohibitions**. MASCD, incorporated in 1956, promotes practical and effective soil, water, and natural resource related programs to all Marylanders. Through individual conservation districts MASCD provides leadership, education, cooperation, and local direction, on a voluntary basis.

House Bill 91 would prohibit the distribution, sale and use of corn, wheat and soybean seed treated with neonicotinoid pesticides. Neonicotinoid seed treatments are a critical tool for enabling conservation tillage and no-till and, including cover crops in row crop systems. Both cover crops and conservation tillage are integral practices in Maryland's Watershed Implementation Plan and essential in meeting our Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) goals. Maryland farmers plant between 300,000 and 500,000 acres of cover crops on an annual basis and according to the last Agricultural Census, as many as one million acres use conservation tillage.

Both no-till and cover-crop systems rely on leaving residue on the soil surface. While these practices deliver well-documented benefits such as reduced erosion, improved water infiltration, and increased soil carbon, they also increase early-season insect pressure from pests such as seed-corn maggot, wireworms, white grubs, and other soil-dwelling insects that thrive in these environments. Neonicotinoid seed treatments protect the seed and emerging plant during the most vulnerable growth stages, allowing crops to establish successfully without tillage or additional insecticide applications. Seed treatments allow farmers to plant directly into living or recently terminated cover crops often referred to as "planting green" without significantly increasing the risk of stand failure. Without this protection, many farmers would be forced to terminate cover crops earlier or abandon them altogether, reducing nitrogen scavenging, erosion control, and soil-carbon benefits.

Neonicotinoid seed treatments are a foundational tool that allows farmers to adopt and maintain conservation practices without increasing risk of agronomic loss. Restricting their use would push farmers away from no-till and cover crops and toward more disruptive practices that increase soil disturbance and carbon loss and for these reasons we respectfully request an **unfavorable** committee report. Thank you for your kind consideration and attention to this legislation.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jen Nelson, Executive Director  
Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts