



Maryland Department of Agriculture

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Agriculture | Maryland's Leading
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Maryland Department of Agriculture Legislative Comment Date: February 4th, 2026

BILL NUMBER: HB 91
BILL TITLE: Agriculture - Neonicotinoid Pesticides - Prohibitions
MDA POSITION: OPPOSE

The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) respectfully submits this letter in opposition of *House Bill 91 – Agriculture – Neonicotinoid Pesticides - Prohibitions*.

HB 91 prohibits the distribution, sale, and use of corn, wheat, and soybean seeds that have been treated with neonicotinoid pesticides, and prohibits the use of neonicotinoid pesticides for outdoor ornamental plants and turf. While the Department shares the goal of protecting pollinators and promoting environmental health, this legislation as drafted poses significant threats to the economic viability of Maryland's grain sector and undermines the very conservation practices that make Maryland a national leader in climate-smart agriculture.

Maryland is a pioneer in no-till farming and cover crop implementation. These practices are essential for soil health and water quality, and provide farmers an edge in early-season planting while the soil still retains moisture. However, these environments are high-risk for soil-borne pests. Neonicotinoid seed treatments provide targeted, pre-emergent protection that allows these crops to survive the early season while significantly reducing the need for broad-scale foliar insecticide sprays later in the year.

Maryland's grain sector operates within a regional and national seed market but only accounts for less than 1% of national grain acreage. A prohibition would effectively sever Maryland farmers from the regional seed supply, limiting their access to competitively priced, high-performing hybrids.

HB 91 authorizes the Maryland Secretary of Agriculture the discretion to temporarily suspend the prohibition for neonicotinoid treated agricultural seeds after consultation with the Department of the Environment and Department of Natural Resources under certain

circumstances, including insufficient non-treated supply, financial hardship from compliance. The Secretary of Agriculture could also temporarily suspend the prohibition for outdoor ornamental plants and turf if, after consultation with the Department of the Environment and Department of Natural Resources, a valid environmental emergency exists and there are no other pesticides to address the emergency. While HB 91 provides the Secretary of Agriculture with the discretion to temporarily suspend prohibitions under certain emergencies, this suspension is limited to one year. Agriculture requires multi-year planning. Reevaluating seed legality on an annual basis introduces an additional layer of uncertainty for farmers already struggling with volatile commodity prices and a changing climate.

Neonicotinoids remain approved for use by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which is currently conducting a comprehensive registration review and pollinator risk assessment. Furthermore, seed treatments are a cornerstone of Integrated Pest Management (IPM). They offer precise, targeted control that reduces the overall chemical footprint by preserving beneficial insects that would otherwise be harmed by repeated foliar applications.

For these reasons, the Maryland Department of Agriculture urges an **unfavorable report** on HB 91. MDA appreciates the consideration of the above information in the Committee's deliberations.

If you have additional questions, please contact Harrison Palmer, MDA Chief of Staff at Harrisonb.palmer@maryland.gov or (410) 980-9887.