



SIERRA CLUB

MAINE CHAPTER

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Senator Dill, Representative Hickman and distinguished members of the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee:

Thank you for allowing me to present our testimony to you. My name is Alice Elliott and I am here today as Director of Sierra Club Maine. Our chapter represents more than 28,000 members and supporters in Maine and is one of 64 chapters of the oldest grassroots environmental organization in the country. I am pleased to represent our members and in urging this committee to vote **Ought to Pass on LD# 2083**, which would remove four neonicotinoid pesticides (dinotefuran, clothianidin, imidacloprid, and thiamethoxam) from homeowner and landscaper use.

Studies show that this class of pesticides are emerging as being more toxic than other pesticides to bees. Studies show that of 92 individual compounds (insecticides, fungicides, miticides, herbicides) 3 neonicotinoids were in the top five chemicals that are considered the highest risk to honey bees and bumble bees. Bumble bees are particularly sensitive to these chemicals. Bumblebees are much more efficient pollinators than honeybees, particularly to important Maine crops such as blueberries and cranberries. They mainly forage for pollen rather than nectar, and with every visit to a flower, deposit more pollen to the flower pistils.

Copious research from highly credible research institutions on neonicotinoid pesticides have proven their persistence in the soil, ability to leach into the environment, high water solubility, and potential negative health implications for non-target organisms such as pollinators.

The most common – and problematic – use of neonics (neonicotinoids) is to coat or treat the seeds used to grow corn, soybeans, wheat and more. Any farmer who buys a treated seed applies neonics to his or her fields, irrespective of whether there's a pest problem. Thus, this practice is un-targeted, indiscriminate and oftentimes unneeded. Yet, as one study points out, 79% or more of corn seed in the U.S. comes treated with neonics, making it hard for farmers to obtain seeds without the chemical.

Neonicotinoids are taken up by all parts of the plant as it grows. This means these systemic insecticides are present in pollen and nectar that pollinators can come in contact with when foraging. In addition, they have been found, often at higher levels, on neighboring flowers and grass, in nearby waterways, and persisting in the soil for long periods of time.

Additionally, neonics are sold directly to ordinary consumers in all but three states, turning consumer backyards and suburban areas, which increasingly have become bee havens due to the abundance of wildflowers in yards and parks, into death traps for bees.

Seventy percent of global food crops are pollinated by bees. Sierra Club Maine urges this committee to vote **LD# 2083 Ought to Pass** as an important step in protecting Maine's unpaid and uncelebrated agricultural workers, our pollinators.