

## For Immediate Release

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## Advocates Will Try Again to Restrict Bee-Harming Pesticides in 2016 Session; House Environment Committee to Study Issue

(Annapolis, MD) – A coalition of scientists, beekeepers and farmers working with public health, food and environmental advocates today said while they were disappointed that the Pollinator Protection Act (Senate Bill 163/House Bill 605) did not pass this legislative session, they have built momentum to restrict *neonicotinoid* (aka “neonics”) pesticides next year. The House of Delegates’ Environment and Transportation Committee intends to study scientific research concerning how neonic pesticides affect bees, wildlife, aquatic life and human health over the summer.



“This was the first time Maryland officials considered legislation to restrict these harmful, bee-killing pesticides, and we made considerable progress – in spite of opposition from the powerful chemical and agricultural industry lobbies,” said Delegate Anne Healey (District 22), who sponsored the bill along with Senator Nathan-Pulliam (District 22). “Marylanders support our bi-partisan effort to protect bees, wildlife and public health, and I look forward to continuing this important work next year.”

*Beekeepers “swarm” Annapolis before a Pollinator Protection Act bill hearing on March 13, 2015.*

The Pollinator Protection Act would have restricted consumer use of neonic pesticides to be available for sale only to certified applicators, farmers or veterinarians. It would have also required an informational label on plants, seeds and nursery stock treated with neonics. The bill did not receive a vote in either the House Environment and Transportation or Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs committees.

“Beekeepers are first-hand witnesses to alarming honey bee losses, and the science clearly shows that neonic pesticides are a factor,” said Maryland beekeeper Bonnie Raindrop, who came to Annapolis with

her fellow “beeks” to advocate for the bill. “Around the world, and around the country, government agencies are restricting neonics – Maryland must act, too.”

Advocates say that chemical industry lobbyists put serious pressure on legislators and successfully created confusion around the scientific research – despite a [comprehensive analysis](#) of 1,121 peer-reviewed studies confirming that neonics “are a key factor in the decline of bees.”

“The first year of a new Administration, with such a huge class of freshman lawmakers, is a tough time to pass a new bill -- especially with so many other environmental issues on the table,” said Ruth Berlin of the Maryland Pesticide Education Network. “But with enough muscle by our collective communities, we hope to move this issue forward in the 2016 legislative session. We saw tremendous grassroots support, and we will be back next year.”

Beekeepers have reported average hive losses of 30 percent or higher each year since 2006; in 2012, Maryland beekeepers lost nearly 50 percent of their hives. In addition to killing bees outright, research shows that even low levels of neonic pesticides can impair bees' ability to learn, find their way back to the hive, collect food, produce new queens and mount an effective immune response. Research also shows neonics can harm other wildlife, including birds and butterflies, and they are linked to death of molting blue crabs.

Neonics also pose a risk to human health. The [European Food Safety Authority](#) has concluded that some neonicotinoids may affect the developing human nervous system by affecting functions such as learning and memory.

For more information, read a [fact sheet](#) about the Pollinator Protection Act, a Frequently Asked Questions [document](#) and “Bees in Trouble” fact sheet from Friends of the Earth [here](#).

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The [Smart on Pesticides Maryland](#) coalition works to protect Marylanders and the natural systems we depend upon from the toxic impacts of pesticides. The coalition includes more than 60 organizations, and institutions representing communities, businesses, health care providers, farmers, environmentalists, Waterkeepers, interfaith congregants as well as environmental justice, public health and wildlife advocates.