



Bedford Garden Club

Letter in Support of Birds and Bees Protection Act

New York S699B (Hoylman et al.)/A7429 (Englebright et al.)

The Birds and Bees Protection Act concerns the use of neonicotinoids (aka “neonics”), which is a class of neurotoxic pesticides that includes imidacloprid, thiamethoxam, clothianidin, dinotefuran and acetarniprid.

The Problem: The use of neonics is of significance to both humans, other mammals and bees and other pollinators. Neonics were once considered practically non-toxic to humans and other mammals, but new research reported by NRDC, CDC, and Cornell University, among others, indicates they may have a wide range of physiological effects. Seed treatment using neonics is particularly problematic as it contributes significantly to soil and water contamination without providing significant crop yields to farmers. Research also shows that widespread use of neonics is a leading cause of declines in honeybees as well as wild pollinators and a serious threat to birds, fish and entire ecosystems.

New York’s agricultural economy depends on healthy populations of bees and other pollinators to produce valuable and healthy foods like apples, squash, tomatoes, cherries and other important crops, reportedly worth an estimated \$439 million annually.

We note that the United States Environmental Protection Agency and other independent research have found that neonics can harm human health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31288196/> have found that half of Americans are regularly exposed to neonics. In addition, Federal and State water testing has detected neonics in waters across New York State.

A recent Cornell University review of over 1,100 peer reviewed papers on neonics and the cost-benefit analysis of neonics vs their likely alternatives concluded that neonic-treatments on corn, soybean and wheat seeds—which account for roughly three-quarters of all neonic use in New York agriculture—produce “no overall net-income benefit” to the farmers using them. <https://pollinator.cals.cornell.edu/pollinator-research-cornell/neonicotinoid-report/> The Cornell Report also found that non-agricultural, turf and ornamental neonic uses—with the exception of certain treatments for invasive species—were similarly unneeded or could be replaced with safer, effective alternatives.

The Birds and Bees Protection Act would:

(1) prohibit sale and use of neonic-treated corn, soybean and wheat seeds effective January 1, 2024; (2) prohibit non-agricultural uses of neonics on turf and ornamental plants, effective January 1, 2023; (3) require the New York Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to consider designating other neonic uses as a 'restricted use pesticide' in order to protect bee and bird populations; and (4) require the DEC, in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture and Markets at Cornell University, to study alternatives to neonics.

A "restricted use pesticide" is a pesticide that can be purchased, possessed or used only by a person with a commercial or purchase permit issued by the DEC, and that may be subject to other restrictions on its use as determined by the DEC. This bill would allow the DEC to permit use of neonics to combat invasive species, including but not limited to emerald ash-borer and hemlock woody adelgid.

In summary, the Birds and Bees Protection Act addresses a serious threat to pollinators and ecosystems as well as humans and safeguards the future of New York's food system by banning high risk, low-to-no benefit uses of neonics.

For this reason, the Bedford Garden Club supports passage of S699B/A7429, banning neonic-treated corn, soybean and wheat, and most outdoor, non-agricultural uses of neonics.



Respectfully submitted,
Beth Sachs,
President, Bedford Garden Club

CC: Jayni Chase, Ellen Conrad, Joy Flynn