



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS[®] OF MARYLAND, INC.

TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

SB 198 - NEONICOTINOID PESTICIDES - LABELING, SIGNAGE, AND RESTRICTIONS ON SALES AND USE (POLLINATOR PROTECTION ACT OF 2016)

POSITION: SUPPORT

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Since 1988, the League of Women Voters of the United States has supported policies for sustainable agriculture and regenerative agricultural production that moves toward an environmentally sound agricultural sector. In addition, throughout its 95-year history, the League has supported the right of citizens to be informed.

- This bill would be the first step in requiring that citizens be informed of “neonic” usage in our food supply.

Evidence is accumulating that neonicotinoid pesticides are interfering with important biological and economic processes. Neurotoxic pesticides are turning up more and more often in our streams, affecting stream life and water quality. Much of food production is dependent on honey bees to pollinate our crops. Yet honey bees on which we depend to pollinate crops are dying at an alarming rate, and a major factor in those deaths appears to be the neonics that they have contacted while pollinating plants that have been either deliberately or accidentally sprayed with these pesticides.

- Indeed, during 2014-2015, Maryland beekeepers lost **61 percent** of their bees, about twice the national average and far more than is typical in a year.
- This degree of loss is unsustainable (the beekeeping industry says annual acceptable losses are 14 percent or less).
- **This hurts economically as well:** It costs beekeepers anywhere from \$1,000-1,500 to replace just one beehive.
- **This is not a one-time problem:** since 2006, beekeepers have lost an [average of 30 percent](http://libcloud.s3.amazonaws.com/93/4b/3/4908/Bees_in_Trouble.pdf) (normal rates are 5-10 percent).
http://libcloud.s3.amazonaws.com/93/4b/3/4908/Bees_in_Trouble.pdf of their hives.

We are already late in moving to protect our food crops that require pollination. We urge this committee to report favorably on this bill.