

Dr. Katherine Burns
870 River Road
Richmond, ME 04357

Committee on Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry
c/o Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

April 14, 2025

Re: LD 1323, An Act to Prohibit the Use of Neonicotinoid Pesticides and the Use and Sale of Neonicotinoid-treated Seeds

Dear Sen. Talbot Ross, Rep. Pluecker, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Katherine Burns and I am Maine Audubon's Outreach Coordinator for the Coastal Birds Project, however my professional background is in entomology. As a life-long Mainer and a passionate advocate for insect pollinator conservation, I thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of LD 1323, *An Act to Prohibit the Use of Neonicotinoid Pesticides and the Use and Sale of Neonicotinoid-treated Seeds*.

Maine is home to a wide diversity of insect pollinators, including over 270 species of bees. These pollinators are vital for the production of many of the state's key crops, such as blueberries and apples. Therefore, it is important that the State of Maine takes action to protect our native pollinators and the services that they provide. This includes addressing one of the most significant threats currently facing Maine's pollinators: the use of neonicotinoids.

Neonicotinoids are used widely for the control of insect pest species on both ornamental and crop plants. However, though pest species may be the target of neonicotinoid applications, the pesticide works indiscriminately to harm any encountered invertebrate, including bees. Research has shown that, even at low concentrations (such as those often found on treated crop plants or on crop plants that have been grown from treated seeds) neonicotinoid exposure can have sublethal effects on bees that hinder their ability to collect food, avoid predators, and reproduce. In higher concentrations (such as those often found on treated ornamental plants) exposure to these pesticides can kill bees outright¹. Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that only ~5% of applied neonicotinoids are actually taken up by their target plant species, while the majority of the pesticide ends up running off into the soil and local waterways. Once introduced to the wider environment, these neonicotinoids continue to increase in toxicity for years due to their extensive half-life, which poses an additional risk to the health of soil and aquatic invertebrates².

Despite the passing of LD 155 in the 130th Maine Legislature, which banned the use of four types of neonicotinoids in Maine, other types of neonicotinoids are still being introduced into Maine's environment. If passed, LD 1323 would update the current law to prohibit the application of *all* neonicotinoids to all ornamental plants, certain crops, and all crops while they are in bloom, as well as prohibit the use of soybean and cereal crop seeds that have been treated with neonicotinoids. Passing LD 1323 would therefore be a major step for the State of Maine in terms of protecting our local wildlife and ensuring sustainable, lucrative crop production for years to come.

Thank you for your time and consideration!

Sincerely,

Dr. Katherine Burns

¹ [How Neonicotinoids Can Kill Bees \(Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation, 2016\)](#)

² [The environmental risks of neonicotinoid pesticides: A review of the evidence post 2013 \(Goulson & Wood, 2017\)](#)