

Testimony of Ashley Luszczyki
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
In Opposition to L.D. 1323, An Act to Prohibit the Use of Neonicotinoid Pesticides and the Use
and Sale of Neonicotinoid-treated Seeds
April 15, 2025

Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, my name is Ashley Luszczyki. I am here on behalf of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, representing a network of 5,000+ small to large businesses, including members of Maine's agricultural community. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to L.D. 1323, An Act to Prohibit the Use of Neonicotinoid Pesticides and the Use and Sale of Neonicotinoid-treated Seeds.

Neonicotinoid products are a critical tool for farmers, used to protect crops from pests during their most vulnerable early growth stage. Even a short window of pest pressure during planting can impact crop health and reduce yields. Neonic-treated seeds and targeted applications help farmers manage pests proactively, often reducing the need for repeated application.

Maine has already taken steps to reduce the use of neonics to protect our pollinators. In response to L.D. 155, passed during the 130th Legislature, the Board of Pesticide Control (BPC) adopted a regulation prohibiting the use of neonics for residential landscaping use. We believe the current law strikes a balance by protecting Maine's agriculture community, products, and pollinators.

The Chamber believes that L.D. 1423 goes a step too far – a widespread prohibition may undermine crop health, reduce yield, and increase costs at a time when our agriculture community faces many pressure points. This legislation will further disadvantage Maine farms in an already tough agricultural economy. Furthermore, this policy won't just impact farmers – their ability to compete will ripple into the direct jobs they provide as well as those offered by the businesses that support the agriculture industry.

As Governor Scott of Vermont noted in his May 2024 veto letter on similar legislation, these bans risk unintended consequences – putting farmers in states with neonic agricultural bans at a significant disadvantage. Notably, he emphasized the importance of closely monitoring and studying the issue and science to protect pollinators, farms, and the food they produce. We agree with this approach.

It's also important to note that beyond the BPC, neonics are regulated under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act. While a couple of states have banned neonics for agricultural use, a state-level ban would largely make Maine an outlier. Maine farmers will have to rely on less effective alternatives that may require more frequent application. This will increase costs and has the potential to compromise the quality of food that we all depend on.

Again, we believe a balanced approach that supports pollinator health while recognizing the importance of tools like neonics is critical. For these reasons, we urge you to consider the economic impacts of L.D. 1323 – not just on farmers, but on the rural communities and businesses that depend on a strong, sustainable agricultural sector. We appreciate your consideration and urge you to oppose this legislation.