DEFEND OUR HEALTH

Solutions for a Toxic-Free Tomorrow

Testimony of Sarah Woodbury, Vice President of Policy and Advocacy, Defend Our Health
In Support of LD 1323, "An Act to Prohibit the Use of Neonicotinoid Pesticides and the Use and Sale of Neonicotinoid-treated Seeds"
Before the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee
April 15, 2025

Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker and members of the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee, my name is Sarah Woodbury. I am the vice president of policy and advocacy for Defend Our Health. Defend Our Health's mission is the make sure that everyone has equal access to safe food and drinking water, healthy homes and products that are toxic-free and climate friendly. I am here to testify in support of LD 1323, "An Act to Prohibit the Use of Neonicotinoid Pesticides and the Use and Sale of Neonicotinoid-treated Seeds".

The legislature passed LD 155 in the 130th legislature that prohibited the use of "neonic" pesticides in outdoor residential landscapes, with an exemption for products used for preserving wood, controlling or treating indoor insects and treating pets. Even with the passage of this legislation, neonicotinoids are still being introduced to Maine ecosystems. LD 1323 would strengthen the current neonics law. Given the potential impact of these pesticides on human health, and particularly on the health of our children, restricting their use is well justified.

The US Environmental Protection Agency receives and aggregates reports of poisoning and adverse events associated with pesticide use. Scientists with the Natural Resources Defense Council requested this data from the agency and found that neonics, especially those used in home garden treatments, were amongst the most commonly reported. Imidacloprid, just one of the neonics, was linked to over 1600 poisoning reports over a decade[1].

A growing body of scientific studies has linked chronic exposure to neonics, especially during early childhood, to adverse outcomes. Like the organophosphate pesticides that neonics replace, they exhibit neurotoxic effects to which developing brains are especially sensitive. Studies of animals have documented both physiological[2] and neurobehavioral[3] changes associated with exposure to neonics, including imidacloprid.

A 2017 systematic review of neonic impacts on human health, while identifying gaps and problems in the literature and calling for continued study, noted potentially significant

[1] Raw data available at https://foiaonline.gov/foiaonline/action/public/search/quickSearch?query=HQ-2019-004044
[2] Berheim, E.H., Jenks, J.A., Lundgren, J.G. *et al.* Effects of Neonicotinoid Insecticides on Physiology and Reproductive Characteristics of Captive Female and Fawn White-tailed Deer. *Sci Rep* **9,** 4534 (2019). https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-019-40994-9
[3] Abou-Donia *et al.* Imidacloprid induces neurobehavioral deficits and increases expression of glial fibrillary acidic protein in the motor cortex and hippocampus in offspring rats following in utero exposure. *J Toxicol Environ Health* A. 2008;71(2):119-30. https://doi.org/10.1080/15287390701613140

malformations of the developing heart and brain, autism spectrum disorder, and a cluster of symptoms including memory loss and finger tremors[4].

During the hearing for the initial neonic bill, we expressed concern that the exemptions laid out under the bill were too broad. LD 1323 rightly expands the current law to prohibit all neonics, which we think is appropriate given the impacts of neonics on the health and environment. We urge the committee to vote "ought to pass" on LD 1323.

Thank you.

[4] Cimino AM, Boyles AL, Thayer KA, Perry MJ. 2017. Effects of neonicotinoid pesticide exposure on human health: a systematic review. Environ Health Perspect 125:155–162; http://dx.doi.org/10.1289/EHP515