



Vicki Doudera

18 Trim Street
Camden, ME 04843
(207) 542-1990

Victoria.Doudera@legislature.maine.gov

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

2 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002
(207) 287-1400
TTY: MAINE RELAY 711

April 15, 2025

Testimony of Representative Vicki Doudera presenting
**LD 1323, An Act to Prohibit the Use of Neonicotinoid Pesticides and the Use
and Sale of Neonicotinoid-treated Seeds**
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

Good afternoon, Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. My name is Vicki Doudera and I represent House District 41, the towns of Camden and Rockport. I appreciate the opportunity to present **LD 1323, An Act to Prohibit the Use of Neonicotinoid Pesticides and the Use and Sale of Neonicotinoid-treated Seeds**.

Neonicotinoids are a leading contributor to pollinator population decline, and they are linked to numerous adverse health impacts for people as well – problems such as developmental malformations, memory loss, and finger tremors. This committee did great work in the 130th, when the Legislature took the critical first steps to limit the most harmful neonicotinoid pesticides – commonly referred to as “neonics,” from residential use except under special circumstances with the passage of LD 155.

This bill builds upon that legislation. Science continues to show us that the presence of neonics in our environment—particularly through the new prevalence of treated seeds—is both pervasive and devastating. LD 1323 builds on the progress that Maine has made by accomplishing three primary objectives:

- 1) The bill prohibits neonicotinoid pesticides application on outdoor crops during bloom, soybeans and cereal crops, ornamental plants, crops harvested after bloom in the leafy vegetables, brassica, bulb vegetables, herbs and spices, and stalk, stem and leaf petiole vegetable crop groups, and;
- 2) Prohibits neonicotinoid-treated seed for soybeans or for any crop in the cereal grains crop group, and;
- 3) Authorizes the Commissioner of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF), after consultation with the Commissioner of Environmental Protection (DEP), to waive these prohibitions and issue a written exemption order if certain conditions are met.

Neonics are systemic pesticides. Once applied, they're absorbed into the plant and expressed in all its tissues: leaves, pollen, nectar, and even the roots. Over 90% of neonics applied as treatments ultimately contaminate surrounding soils, plants, air, and water.¹

The resulting consequences for our wildlife, water, pollinators, and food systems are staggering. Neonics are most widely known for their impact on pollinators, and bees in particular, as they are particularly toxic to them. They can cause a myriad of sublethal and lethal effects—from reduced flight and navigation ability, to reduced viability of pupae, to death.² Neonics have also been found to disrupt developmental processes and increase mortality of amphibians³, decrease organ sizes in deer populations⁴, and cause loss of motor control and death for many bird species⁵.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), commonly used neonics like imidacloprid are harmful to three-quarters of all endangered plants and animals.⁶ In Maine, the Northern Long-eared Bat and Piping Plover—both federally protected species—were found to be particularly vulnerable to neonic exposure. Butterflies – an important pollinator and an indicator species – are also at risk from neonics. A new study compiling butterfly surveys across the country found a 22% overall decline, while seven species found in Maine declined by more than 50%. Pesticide use is a factor.⁷

Contrary to common belief, neonics do not consistently boost crop yields. In fact, Cornell University's analysis of over 250 studies revealed that 87-93% of corn and 82-89% of soybean fields show no yield benefit when neonic-treated seeds are used.⁸ The EPA concluded that neonic seed treatments for soybeans in particular provide at most a 0–1.7% benefit in net operating revenue.⁹ Farmers often aren't even aware that their seeds are pre-treated with these chemicals, and untreated seeds are difficult to obtain, making real choice elusive.

Maine is not alone in addressing these concerns. Vermont and New York have passed similar laws. Internationally, the European Commission, as well as Quebec and Ontario, have imposed restrictions on neonic-coated seeds – and their agricultural economies continue to thrive.

¹ <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/sustainable-food-systems/articles/10.3389/fsufs.2020.595855/full>

²

https://xerces.org/sites/default/files/2018-05/16-023_01_XercesSoc_ExecSummary_How-Neonicotinoids-Can-Kill-Bees_web.pdf

³

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S001393512402499X#:~:text=Studies%20such%20as%20that%20by,Union%20directives%20for%20aquatic%20organisms>

⁴

<https://www.twincities.com/2021/03/01/study-shows-widespread-neonicotinoid-exposure-in-minnesota-white-tailed-deer/>

⁵ <https://abcbirds.org/news/2023-neonic-report/>

⁶ <https://www.epa.gov/pesticides/epa-finalizes-biological-evaluations-assessing-potential-effects-three-neonicotinoid>

⁷ <https://www.pressherald.com/2025/03/23/maine-butterfly-species-among-those-experiencing-fastest-declines/>

⁸ <https://cornell.app.box.com/v/2020-neonicotinoid-report>

⁹

https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2014-10/documents/benefits_of_neonicotinoid_seed_treatments_to_soybean_production_2.pdf

I believe LD 1323 is a balanced, thoughtful update to our existing law. It strengthens the current regulation to prohibit the application of *all* neonics to ornamental plants, plants during bloom, and certain crops, as well as prohibiting the use of neonic coated soybean and cereal crop seeds – while still allowing for emergency exemptions in the case of serious agricultural or environmental threats.

These emergency exemptions are important. Please remember that this is not a ban. This is a way to make sure we are using these pesticides only when absolutely necessary. LD 1323 is also a way to keep choices available to our farmers, to ensure that seed companies and pesticide manufacturers do not limit consumer options.

Maine's 270 native bee species and other pollinators, our agricultural future, our clean water, and our unique wildlife heritage all depend on us getting this right. We have the science and the economic data. And with LD 1323, we have a sound plan.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration. I hope you will support this important measure.