

House Committee on Climate, Energy, and Environment
March 4, 2025

Testimony in Support of HB 2679

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

I write today in strong support of HB 2679, which would reclassify neonicotinoid pesticides as restricted-use pesticides (RUP) in Oregon. This necessary step aligns Oregon with scientific consensus on the harmful impacts of neonicotinoids on pollinators and ecosystems, ensuring responsible pesticide use while protecting the state's vital agricultural and natural resources.

Neonicotinoids and Pollinator Health

Pollinator health is a complex issue, and while neonicotinoids are not the sole cause of bee population declines, they are a highly significant contributor. A substantial body of peer-reviewed research confirms that neonicotinoids negatively impact pollinators through direct toxicity and sublethal effects, impairing navigation, foraging, and reproduction.¹

The 2017 global assessment published in *Science* found strong evidence that neonicotinoids harm pollinators, even at field-realistic exposure levels. The European Union responded by banning outdoor use of three major neonicotinoids due to their severe risks to pollinators.² My hope is that Oregon will follow the science and take action to mitigate harm to our essential pollinators!

Oregon's Existing Efforts Are Not Sufficient

While the Pollinator Task Force is great at prioritizing education and research, it does nothing to directly regulate harmful pesticides or improve overall pollinator health and habitat quality.³ Oregon must take stronger

¹ Woodcock, B. A., et al. (2017). "Country-specific effects of neonicotinoid pesticides on honey bees and wild bees." *Science*, 356(6345), 1393-1395.

² European Commission. (2018). "Neonicotinoids: Commission confirms restrictions on outdoor use."

³ Sagili, R. R., Carlson, E. A., & Melathopoulos, A. (2025). *Research*. Honey Bee Lab, Oregon State University. Retrieved from <https://honeybeelab.oregonstate.edu/honey-bee-lab/research-3>

action to restrict access to highly systemic pesticides, like neonicotinoids, which remain widely available to untrained users in big-box stores.

Additionally, pesticide labels do not prevent neonicotinoids from persisting in soil and water or drifting onto flowering plants used by pollinators. The EPA's "bee box" warning label is inadequate, as it still permits widespread use of neonicotinoids, exposing pollinators to lethal and sublethal doses.⁴ Stronger regulatory measures, such as reclassifying neonicotinoids as RUPs, are necessary to protect Oregon's environment.

Reclassification is a Necessary and Proportionate Response

This policy would not ban neonicotinoids; it would simply ensure that they are used only by licensed applicators trained in their responsible application. This ensures that these highly systemic chemicals are applied only when necessary and in accordance with best practices that minimize harm to pollinators and non-target species.

I would also like to address the concern about small farmers being "forced" to use "harsher chemistries" that are misleading. Many effective, less harmful pest management alternatives exist, including Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategies that reduce reliance on chemical pesticides. Organic and sustainable farmers successfully produce food and crops without neonicotinoids, demonstrating that alternatives are both effective and economically viable.⁵

Neonicotinoid Regulation is a Proven Strategy

Reclassifying neonicotinoids as RUPs has been effective elsewhere. Ontario introduced restrictions on neonicotinoids in 2015, leading to an increase in wild bee populations and improved colony health in managed hives.⁶ Similarly, the European Union's neonicotinoid ban has been associated with improved pollinator recovery in some regions.⁷

⁴ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). (2019). "EPA Actions to Protect Pollinators: Labeling and Risk Mitigation."

⁵ Furlan, L., & Kreuzweiser, D. (2015). "Alternatives to neonicotinoid insecticides for pest control: Efficacy and sustainability." *Frontiers in Environmental Science*, 3, 60.

⁶ Tsvetkov, N., et al. (2017). "Chronic exposure to neonicotinoids reduces honey bee health near corn crops." *Science*, 356(6345), 1395-1397.

⁷ Rundlöf, M., et al. (2015). "Seed coating with a neonicotinoid insecticide negatively affects wild bees." *Nature*, 521(7550), 77-80.

The -1 Amendment is Inadequate

The -1 amendment, which only restricts some access while continuing to allow broad agricultural use, does not go far enough. I believe this amendment fails to effectively address the concerns of pollinator protection. Untrained and unlicensed users account for a significant portion of neonicotinoid exposure for pollinators. True pollinator protection requires ensuring these chemicals are applied only when truly necessary and by trained professionals. Please oppose the -1 amendment.

Closing Thoughts to Consider

HB 2679 is a necessary step to align Oregon's policies with the best available science on pollinator health. Reclassifying neonicotinoids as restricted-use pesticides is a common-sense measure that will protect pollinators without placing undue burdens on responsible farmers. Oregon has an opportunity to lead on pollinator protection and sustainable agriculture by passing HB 2679 without weakening amendments.

I urge you to support this bill and reject misleading information that seeks to maintain the status quo at the expense of our environment.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Krystal Abrams
Chair, Bee City Eugene Committee