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I am writing in support of HF 2070, a bill to establish the rusty patched bumble bee as the Minnesota state bee. The rusty patched bumble bee represents beauty and resilience of Minnesota. It's designation as the state bee would demonstrate Minnesota's commitment to preserving our natural resources and protecting our pollinators.

I am an Extension Educator and Researcher at the University of Minnesota Bee Lab focused on bee conservation. When I first started working with bumble bees, the rusty patched bumble bee was everywhere I looked for bees. Suddenly in the year 2000, they disappeared. This event led to my focus on bringing these beautiful and important pollinators back in Minnesota.



Minnesota stands out as a champion of the rusty patched bumble bee and our action are crucial to its recovery. The rusty patched bumble bee was federally listed as an endangered species in 2017. In 2018, a total of 471 rusty patched bumble bees were seen anywhere in the world. 165 of these were in MN. **This represents 35% of all rusty patched bumble bee individuals.** I founded the Minnesota Bumble Bee survey in 2007 to see if the rusty patched bumble bee could still be found in Minnesota. In the last 10 years, **MN volunteers have found rusty patched bumble bees in 12 different counties**, as far north as Clearwater and Itasca County, as far south as Houston and Jackson Counties.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service has identified public awareness as a key step in the recovery of this species. Designation of the rusty patched bumble bee as Minnesota state bee would go a long way in raising awareness and increasing opportunities to protect the remaining populations of this important pollinator.

Thank you for your attention to this vital issue.

Sincerely,

Elaine Evans, PhD.
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