



2355 Highway 36 West
Suite 400
Roseville MN 55113
651.739.9332
mn.audubon.org

Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee
State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

February 28, 2022

Re: Support of H.F. 3630 – Lawns to Legumes

Dear Members of the Committee:

Audubon Minnesota supports appropriating funds for the Lawns to Legumes program, as described in H.F. 3524. The program helps to increase residential habitat for bees, birds, and butterflies when we are seeing dramatic declines in their populations. With 96 percent of all land-based bird species in North America feeding insects to their young, we need plants that support the food chain.

Our recently released Survival by Degrees report paints a dire picture for the future for birds: More than 150 species in Minnesota are threatened by impacts of changes to Minnesota's weather patterns. A recent study from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology also found a staggering loss of birds. **Collectively, North American bird populations have declined by 29% and grassland bird populations have declined by 53% since 1970.**

In addition to shifting habitats, Minnesota continues to experience erratic weather events with both major flooding and periods of unusual drought. As average weather years become rare, increasing the number of deep-rooted native plants prepares our local ecosystems to better tolerate the periods of record rainfalls as well as the long stretches of heat and drought.

To survive, birds in Minnesota need native plants and the insects that have co-evolved with them. Most landscaping plants are exotic species that provide little food for wildlife. Exotic plants also generally require more water and chemicals to thrive, increasing maintenance time, costs, and water contamination. By adding more native plants to backyards through programs like Lawns to Legumes, we can help birds in the face of climate change, urban development, and other threats.

Sincerely,

Dr. Dale Gentry
Conservation Manager
Audubon Minnesota

Peter Buessler
President
Mississippi Headwaters Audubon Society



March 2, 2022

Dear Chair Hansen and Members of the House Environment Committee:

Metro Cities, representing the shared interests of cities across the metropolitan area, appreciates the opportunity to comment on HF 3630 (Morrison). Metro Cities supports this bill.

Pollinator insects lose food and nesting sites needed for survival when native vegetation is replaced by roadways, manicured lawns, crops, and non-native gardens. Converting traditional grass lawns has been identified as a way to increase pollinator habitat.

Metro Cities supports funding for the Lawns to Legumes program, which provides grants to private homeowners to convert traditional lawns to pollinator friendly landscapes. Metro Cities further supports expanding eligibility of this program to include municipally owned property and would encourage the committee to consider adding this eligibility.

A map produced by the MN Board of Water and Soil Resources identifies much of the metropolitan area as having a high potential for rusty patched bumble bees. Residents and local officials are eager to make use of Lawns to Legumes grant funding to help protect the Minnesota state bee and other pollinator insects.

Thank you for your consideration of this letter. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Mike Lund
Government Relations Specialist
Metro Cities