

March 30, 2022

Transportation Finance and Policy Division

Chair Hornstein and Committee Members:

I ask for your support for HF 4313

There are numerous scientific papers reporting on the increasing decline in insects in the US and worldwide.

In order for pollinators to be healthy and function efficiently, they need to be able to find a variety of nutritional resources. Basically, just like us, they need a balanced diet, but not all pollen and nectar have equal nutritional value, and there is simply not enough quality diversified habitat on our landscapes. Inadequate forage has led to serious losses in honey bee colonies, as well as in populations of many native bees. Bumble bees are the most efficient of native pollinators and are capable of fertilizing many crops that honey bees cannot. We need them all to sustain the many varieties of crops and other plants throughout our state that we depend on.

Unfortunately, bees bring chemicals back to their hives from pesticide exposure, which has led to multiple problems in bee's ability to navigate, reproduce, and in efficient colony function. Beekeepers are losing 30-50% of their hives each year. 25% of our native bumble bees are also in decline.

When pollinators cannot find a diversity of native food resources, they are less healthy, and together with exposure to pesticides, their immune systems are weakened, making them more susceptible to diseases, pathogens and parasites.

In addition to bees, aquatic insects have also been declining as pesticides have been found in waterways from erosion and drift, which has led to the numbers of mayflies and other bioindicators of water quality decreasing. It is our responsibility to find ways to provide more carefully managed habitat that offers the diversity needed to create ecological resilience.

I travel on several of our state highways throughout the year. When driving out of the cities I am struck by the miles of state land adjacent to the highways that could be potential habitat for pollinators with integrated roadside management and establishment of native vegetation. Currently there are many acres that are now either mowed or filled with poor quality vegetation that could be transformed into natural habitat for our pollinators and other wildlife.

I urge you to give HF 4313 your careful consideration and support.

This IS something you can do to help bring back sustainable populations of pollinators, nesting birds, and other wildlife.

Thank you.

Margot Monson, entomologist and beekeeper
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