



June 29, 2021

Representative David A. Bennett (D), Chair
Rhode Island House Environment and Natural Resources Committee
State House
Providence, RI 02903

Re: NEPMA Moves from a Support to an Oppose Position for Extraneous Restrictions on Professional Structural Indoor & Outdoor Public Health Uses of Neonicotinoid Pesticides – Our Industry Faces Restrictions on Uses that DO NOT IMPACT POLLINATORS

Dear Chairman Bennet, Vice-Chairman O'Brien, Vice-Chairman Phillips, and Members of the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee:

The New England Pest Management Association (NEPMA), the trade group for structural pest management companies or “pest control” companies in Rhode Island, appreciates the opportunity to share our thoughts on HB 5641, as we want to be constructive in the policymaking process. **Also, we want to make it clear that we applaud Representative Kislak and the other bill sponsors’ efforts to protect pollinators in Rhode Island. We testified orally twice and supported this bill with amendments.**

HOWEVER, we are greatly disappointed that the amended version of the bill jeopardizes public health, hinders the professional structural pest control industry, and disproportionately harms low-income Rhode Islanders that face more ant, bed bug, and cockroach infestations. Other states such as Connecticut¹, Maine², Maryland³, Massachusetts⁴, and Vermont⁵ were all able to balance allowing the professional structural pest control industry to protect public health and property while allowing for the protection of pollinators.

As written, HB 5641 and S.702 fall incredibly short compared to the efforts of other states by restricting pesticide uses that DO NOT impact pollinators. HB 5641 and S.702 are off-

¹ CT General Assembly, S. 231 (2016), <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2016/ACT/pa/2016PA-00017-R00SB-00231-PA.htm>

² ME Legislature, LD 155 (2021), <http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/getPDF.asp?paper=HP0111&item=5&snum=130>

³ MD General Assembly, H. 211 (2016), <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2016RS/bills/hb/hb0211e.pdf>

⁴ MDAR Pesticide Board Subcommittee, 3/1/2021, “Subcommittee modifies the registration classification of pesticide products containing neonicotinoids that have outdoor non-structural uses or outdoor nonagricultural uses on the label from general use to state restricted use. These uses include, but are not limited to, use on lawn and turf trees and shrubs, ornamentals, and vegetable and flower gardens. The reclassification shall begin on Jul 1, 2022.” <https://www.mass.gov/doc/summary-of-materials-for-subcommittee-feb-16-2021/download>

⁵ VT Legislature, H.205 (2019), <https://legislature.vermont.gov/bill/status/2020/H.205>

target compared to the other neonicotinoid restriction laws in other states because they hinder the protection of public health and restrict pesticide uses that have nothing to do with pollinators (ex. Bees and other pollinators are not going to be in a restaurant kitchen or inside of a home – this bill restricts the MAJORITY of indoor pest control products that are used to manage ants and cockroaches indoors.)

As written, this bill would require the overwhelming majority of our industry to achieve the highest level of certification in order to manage pests indoors and around structural foundations, where pollinators are not present. The professional structural pest control industry and our licensed applicators use neonicotinoid pesticides in, on, and around structures to protect public health and property. Our industry professionally manages structural pests with neonicotinoids such as ants, bed bugs, carpenter ants, cockroaches, flies, termites, and many others. We acknowledge that HB 5641/S.702 are not targeted at our industry, as our uses are unlikely to impact pollinators.

It is known that structural pest control uses of neonicotinoid pesticides are unlikely to pose a threat to pollinators, as a recent Cornell University study on neonicotinoid pesticides illustrates: **“Negligible risk to pollinators from household pest control and antiparasitic uses... Such applications are unlikely to lead to substantial exposure for insect pollinators.”**⁶

NEPMA stresses the impact that the structural pest management industry has on pollinators is nominal. Pesticide risks to pollinators are not only focused on the toxicity of a chemical, but also the potential for exposure. Structural pest control is very unlikely to lead to exposure. Similarly, exterior treatments applied to the structure and other areas around the structure are also unlikely to result in significant exposure. NEPMA members support, teach, and implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) developed by the National Pest Management Association, which greatly increases the ability of our members to safely use pesticides in a manner that does not impact pollinators.⁷

Problematic provisions:

(3) Indoor pest control products used for preventing, destroying, repelling, or mitigating insects indoors and registered in this state only for indoor use;

Problem: This provision would require all of our employees overnight to earn the highest level of certification to manage ants or cockroaches with neonicotinoids. This provision would mostly allow for bed bug specific products. This bill would restrict these INDOOR uses where POLLINATORS ARE NOT PRESENT.)

Solution: Delete “and registered in this state only for indoor use”

(4) Products used for controlling wood-destroying pests in and around homes and other human-made structures, in accordance with the label; or

⁶ See page 44, "Neonicotinoid insecticides in New York State: Economic Benefits and Risk to Pollinators," Cornell University, <https://pollinator.cals.cornell.edu/pollinator-research-cornell/neonicotinoid-report/>

⁷ NPMA Pollinator Best Management Practices (BMPs), <http://www.multibriefs.com/briefs/npma/PollinatorBMPsFINAL.pdf>

Problem: This provision would require our employees to obtain the highest level of certification for outdoor ant, cockroach, and fly control immediately around the structure with neonicotinoids even though as previously mentioned these uses do not impact pollinators.

Solution: Change to: (4) Products used for controlling wood-destroying pests or other pests around building foundations and other parts of structures.

In conclusion, we are extremely disheartened at the extraneous nature of this bill and restrictions on our professional and public health uses of neonicotinoid pesticides that do not impact pollinators. We believe that the bill can reflect the policies of a half-dozen states that were able to find the balance of protecting both public health and pollinators.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Ted Brayton
Griggs & Browne Pest Control
Past President
New England Pest Management Association