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Attn: Representative Bennett, Chair House Environment and Natural Resources Committee  
and Committee Members

### **Testimony in Opposition to H 5641A**

An Act Relating to Health and Safety- Pesticide Control  
Before the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee

June 29, 2021

Rhode Island Farm Bureau Federation is an independent, non-governmental grassroots organization made up of farmers and others with agricultural interests. Today our over 1200 RIFB members are not only large farmers and small farmers, but also includes those engaged in agricultural industries, teachers of agriculture and consumers.

The Rhode Island Farm Bureau does not support **H 5641A**, which would make outdoor neonicotinoids a state limited use pesticide.

Our previous testimony for the March 26 hearing on the original bill, H 5641, covered the critical importance of insect pollination to agriculture, including the fact that **ninety or more U.S. crops dependent on insect pollination** and that honeybees contribute more than an estimated **\$15 billion** to the agricultural economy. While the contribution of pesticides to the loss of bees is often front and center in the media, there are many factors that impact pollinator health: loss of habitat or flowers that provide pollen and nectar, parasites (such as the Varoa mite), in-hive mite control, hive management, poor nutrition, weather and climate issues, and pesticide exposure are all reasons for bee colony losses.

Neonicotinoid seed treatments are a targeted and effective method of application, often using less pesticide to protect the plant. One pound of neonicotinoids would be replaced with nearly five pounds of older chemicals, resulting in an increase in application rate per acre of 375 percent and hundreds of millions of dollars in additional costs to farming operations. Many farmers have let their pesticide licenses lapse because neonics were an effective and safer option. If they needed to once again become licensed to use neonics, they would then have the option to use other, harsher chemicals. The ability to use a *cheaper* chemical to achieve the same results could very likely result in a farmer going to that cheaper restricted-use pesticide.

As we read through 5641A, we note the exemptions listed in 23-25-40 (b) Restrictions on Neonicotinoids. We find it hard to accept that this legislation shows that neonics are safe enough to be used by pet owners and parents, inside the home, but farmers would not be able to use neonics outdoors without having a pesticide license. If these products are safe enough for use on pets and their collars, when they come in close contact with people, furniture and bedding; safe enough to use on your child's head to remove lice; safe enough to have sprayed in a bedroom to help remove bed bugs, then why is agriculture being singled out as requiring a license outside the home?

We recognize that it is essential that those who treat, handle, transport, and plant treated seeds manage them properly and in accordance with label instructions to minimize the risk of pesticide exposure to non-target organisms. Used properly, in strict accordance with label requirements, neonicotinoid insecticides are environmentally safe and far more benign than some of the older alternatives. They are very important tools in the fight against invasive and harmful pests such as black cutworms and army worms, which can have a devastating effect on crops.

Crop protection products, both natural and synthetic, are important tools that protect plants from tough and invasive pests that can devastate crops and urban landscapes. RIFB supports the responsible use of pesticides, science-based decisions, and **opposes legislation making neonicotinoids state-limited use.**

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Henry B. Wright III".

Henry B. Wright III  
President, RI Farm Bureau