Memorandum of Support

May 28, 2019

S.5816 (Hoylman)/A.7639 (Englebright)

Purpose: This bill will prohibit the sale of any pesticides with the active ingredients clothianidin, imidaclorpid, thiamethoxam, dinotefuran, acetamiprid, thiacloprid, nithiazine, or fipronil all of which are known to cause harm to pollinators.

Statement of Support: New York State’s pollinators are in trouble. Field surveys and exhaustive accounts from professional beekeepers reveal that in only the past few years, populations of honeybees in hives have reduced by at least 40% due to what has been termed “colony collapse syndrome.” While invasive mites/pathogens, habitat loss, diminishing genetic diversity and the negative impacts of climate change are factors in the decline of pollinators, scientific consensus is now laser focused on the impact of a powerful class insecticides, known as neonicotinoids. ‘Neonics’, used to kill leaf, fruit and root chewing agricultural pests, are extremely toxic to bees and other pollinators. If they do not kill bees outright, neonics weaken bee motor function, productivity, and reproduction, reducing pollination and agricultural yields.

New York State also has over 450 wild pollinator species vulnerable to neonics that have seen a proportional decline to that of commercial hives. These wild pollinators are just as invaluable to New York crop production and contribute to NY’s annual $1.2 billion dollar annual fruit and vegetable harvest. Wild pollinators are also an incalculably integral part to NY’s ecosystems and facilitate the perpetual continuance of thousands of plant species and provide an intricate web of connection between all life. In May 2019 a comprehensive UN report came to the dire conclusion that at the current rate of biodiversity loss, over 1 million plant and animal species risk extinction by the end of the century unless human activities drastically change course. New York cannot afford to lose our pollinators, much less the thousands of other species interconnected with these essential insects.

S.5816/A.7639 also contains provisions for the protection of birds, largely requiring the DEC to produce educational pamphlets, directed at the wind energy industry, to guide them on the bird friendly practices they already largely employ. In consideration of the many threats to bird populations, a pejorative singling out of wind energy development seems misplaced when there are many meaningful steps the state could take to protect avian health.

The Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter supports the strong pollinator protection provisions of S.5816/A.7639 and urges your support of banning neonicotinoids in NY.