

Written Testimony
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SB 231, An Act Concerning Pollinator Health-Opposed
Environment Committee
Friday, March 4, 2016

Good afternoon Senator Kennedy, Representative Albis, Senator Chapin, Representative Shaban and the distinguished members of the Environment Committee, my name is Emilio Polce and I am the president of the Connecticut Pest Control Association. I appreciate this opportunity to offer my comments in opposition to SB231.

Banning neonicotinoids does not protect pollinators, it jeopardizes people. I am writing to you today as a concerned citizen and pest management professional, and it is my daily job to protect people from the emotional and physical harm of pests. It has come to my attention legislation was introduced that would ban neonicotinoid insecticides. Any government that bans neonicotinoids, which are a critical tool for managing pests, jeopardizes its economy and the health of its people. Who would want to sleep in a hotel that can't control bed bugs? Eat at a restaurant that can't eliminate cockroaches? Or rent an apartment rife with both?

If you've been following the news recently, you should know that mosquitoes transmit the Zika Virus—resulting in a terrible birth defect called microcephaly, which is characterized by a smaller than average size head and incomplete brain development.¹ Oftentimes, people tend to think of mosquitoes and mosquito bites as an annoyance, but it is important to remember that in some cases, mosquitoes can transmit serious pathogens (not only Zika but Dengue, Chikungunya and West Nile virus). By not limiting the use of Neonicotinoids, I will be able to play a positive role in protecting my customers from pests that are detrimental to public health.

To protect the public, the structural pest management industry uses neonicotinoid pesticides indoors, in soil treatments or on the exterior periphery of buildings. When

¹ "The Rare Birth Defect That's Triggering Panic over the Zika Virus, Explained," *Vox*, <http://www.vox.com/2016/1/28/10861094/microcephaly-zika-virus-birth-defect-pregnancy>.

² Jim Fredericks, "2013 Bugs Without Borders Survey: Executive Summary," *New Survey Finds Bed Bugs Are Increasing Across America*, April 22, 2013, <http://www.pestworld.org/news-and-views/pest-articles/articles/2013-bugs-without-borders-survey-executive-summary/>.

used in this manner, neonicotinoids pose almost no risk of exposure or harm to bees and other pollinators. Neonicotinoids are a valuable tool used throughout the nation to preserve our food supply and in and around homes and business to promote a thriving commerce and protect families.

In 2013, 99.6 percent of pest management professionals received bed bug complaints.² Neonicotinoid pesticides are among the most effective products that manage bed bug infestations. Without neonicotinoids, the emotional well-being of people is at risk. Bed bugs cause anxiety, emotional distress, and insomnia in people. Not only are bed bugs a horror in the daily lives for those citizens that have an infestation but the economic impact of bed bugs can be crippling. A recent study showed that on average, a single report of bed bugs in traveler reviews lowers the value of a hotel room by \$38 and \$23 per room per night for business and leisure travelers respectively.³ I reiterate, bed bug treatments are made inside structures, pose zero risk to pollinators, and help keep hospitals, hotels, nursing homes, and other important places bed bug free.

Neonicotinoids also manage cockroaches, which spread at least 33 kinds of bacteria, six kinds of parasitic worms and at least seven other kinds of human pathogens. They can pick up germs on the spines of their legs and bodies as they crawl through decaying matter or sewage and then carry these into food or onto food surfaces. Medical studies have shown that German cockroach allergens cause allergic reactions and can exacerbate asthma attacks, especially in children. Taking away neonicotinoids from pest management professionals is a threat to public health.

Neonicotinoids are extremely important for the treatment of termites. Termites cause an estimated \$5 billion dollars in damage each year in the U.S. alone.⁴ No homeowner wants to see the value of their largest investment destroyed by wood consuming pests that can cause extreme damage to their property.

In conclusion, banning neonicotinoids is not going to protect pollinators, it will jeopardize people and their property. I understand the need to protect pollinators and my industry has taken a leadership role in their protection. From working with Congress, the EPA, and the Pollinator Partnership, pest management professionals are fully supportive of pollinator health. If you want to help protect children from the Zika virus and other diseases transmitted by pests, defend homes from destructive termites, give your constituents a chance at a good night's sleep free from bed bugs, and keep your restaurant plate free of cockroaches, we strongly encourage that you consider the facts and oppose this legislation. Let pest management professionals do their jobs as protectors of public health and property.

Sincerely,
Emilio Polce
President