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Environment Committee – March 4, 2016

Written Testimony for SB 231 - An Act Concerning Pollinator Health

The Connecticut Association of School Business Officials (CASBO) is a non-profit professional association that represents school business officials (SBOs) throughout the state of Connecticut. SBO's are responsible for most aspects of school business and operations, including but not limited to, developing and monitoring school district budgets, as well as overseeing school maintenance and operations, including school playground safety, and field preparation and care. This can involve safely dealing with stinging insects including bees.

It is within this context that we make the following comments about SB 231.

Bee and pollinator health is a complex issue dating back to the 1800s. Research points to multiple factors affecting pollinators, including the Varroa mite, other pests and parasites, microbial diseases, bee management practices, habitat loss, and weather. Given the primary stressors to managed honey bees are the Varroa mite, other pests, habitat and nutrition, there is nothing to be gained by a bill targeting the use of neonicotinoid insecticides.

Positive support and outcomes for our state's honeybees must rely on reliable data, innovation and collaboration. We strongly support the establishment of an independent task force to study and evaluate all aspects of this issue before drawing conclusions about certain pesticides. This task force should include scientists and other subject matter experts including arborists, groundskeepers, horticulturalists and agriculture science members. Education, not piecemeal regulation, is essential to a balanced approach to this issue.

CASBO, as well as many other municipal organizations, believes that a comprehensive, balanced approach that safely addresses all safety issues is a far better way to ensure the safety of our school children.

Thank You.