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March 3, 2016

Re: S.B.231, An Act Concerning Pollinator Health

To: The Honorable Ted Kennedy, Jr. , Senate Chairman; The Honorable James Albis, House Chairman; The Honorable Clark J. Chapin, Senate Ranking Member; The Honorable John T. Shaban, House Ranking Member; and all Environment Committee Members

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to discuss the habitats and populations of pollinators and the benefits of pollinator habitats for birds. My name is Patrick Comins and I am the Director of Bird Conservation at Audubon Connecticut.

Audubon Connecticut is the state program of the National Audubon Society representing six local Chapters and over 10,000 members across the state. Our mission is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity.

Audubon Connecticut supports S.B.231, the goals of which are to implement state and private actions that are aimed at protecting pollinator populations through restrictions on the use of neonicotinoids and the increase and preservation of pollinator habitats.

Many of the birds of highest conservation concern to us are insectivorous and especially depend on the protein provided through insect prey to successfully raise chicks in the nesting season. Healthy populations of pollinators and other insects will translate into a healthy prey base for birds such as flycatchers, swallows, warblers, vireos and tanagers. Additionally, habitats that support pollinators offer important foraging habitat, particularly for migrating birds. Effective pollinator habitats offer an all-you-eat buffet for migrating songbirds along the busy highway that is known as the Atlantic Flyway. Anything we can do to increase populations of pollinators will also ensure that we can continue to be a five-star rest stop on this critical highway for migrating birds. Radar studies have shown that Connecticut is particularly important as a stopover area for songbirds in fall migration. Some of these birds use our coast as the last rest stop before an arduous and impressive transoceanic journey to wintering areas in Latin America. This bill will greatly benefit the insect prey and habitats upon which these long-distance travelers rely to arrive safely on their wintering grounds.

I want to thank the Committee Leadership for your time and the opportunity to testify on this important issue.

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