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March 2, 2016

TO: Environment Committee

**FROM: Susan Pronovost, Executive Director
Connecticut Greenhouse Growers Association**

RE: *S.B. No. 231 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING POLLINATOR HEALTH

My name is Susan Pronovost. I reside in Waterbury and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Greenhouse Growers Association. We appreciate the opportunity to offer brief comments about S.B. No. 231 *An Act Concerning Pollinator Health*.

By way of background, CGGA promotes the interests of the greenhouse industry which in Connecticut is largely comprised of family-owned small businesses that grow bedding plants, annual and perennial plants, and greenhouse crops. Connecticut does have several large, multi-million dollar greenhouse growers as well, who contribute heavily to the State of Connecticut through payroll taxes and the purchases of supplies and materials. There are about 200 active greenhouse operations in Connecticut.

The CGGA shares the concerns of the Environment Committee as to the significant decrease of pollinators in our ecosystem and colony collapse of honey bee hives. As agricultural producers, we are extremely sensitive to these issues and wish to be part of the process by partnering with those who seek to identify the true cause(s) that influence pollinator health and die-off

We would note that the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station is conducting research that will hopefully provide some answers regarding pollinator health. We understand that the use of neonicotinoids in pesticide applications may be suspect, however there is currently no conclusive scientific proof that positively identifies these compounds as a singular detriment to pollinator health. We would point to other issue such habitat modification and/or elimination, reduction of native flower species, and climate-based issues that have helped to promulgate parasites and viruses such as the Israeli Acute Paralysis Virus that are quite detrimental to bee and pollinator populations. We urge the Environment Committee to examine all of the published case studies objectively. The CGGA would ask that the Honorable Members of the Environment Committee contemplate the fact that published case studies of neonicotinoid applications were conducted under a specific set of conditions that artificially amplified the amount of neonicotinoid-based pesticides utilized during the test case. The case study pesticides were also applied in a manner that would be considered reckless based upon the application methods utilized in simulated weather conditions during experimental research.

We would humbly request that prior to any discussion as to the total elimination of neonicotinoid use in Connecticut, that the Environment Committee weigh the environmental and economic impacts of alternative pesticide applications. Old pesticide technology is often environmentally unsound. We would point to old technology pesticides that were once considered "tried and true" – DDT and Chlordane. The residual toxicity of these first generation pesticides is still prevalent in our ecosystem.

Additionally, older generation pesticide technology may not be effective against current pests. Aphids, flea beetles, spider mites, etc., have developed immunity to the previous generation of pesticides. Our growers export millions of dollars of annual and perennial plants from this state to retail and wholesale customers throughout the northeast and other points west and south. The economic tidal wave of failed bedding plant crops that will have suffered insect damage could potentially desiccate a vibrant greenhouse industry that pours tens of millions of dollars into this state's economy and employs thousands of Connecticut's citizens annually.

We are at a critical crossroads in regards to the study of pollinator health and the possibility of reactive decision-making without conclusive scientific findings. We are highly supportive of valid scientific research on the matter; ultimately it will be a positive step forward for all agricultural producers and indeed, for our environment.

The Connecticut Greenhouse Growers Association respectfully requests that we be included in the process and we should be considered a resource of growers who are anxious to share their knowledge and experiences with the Environment Committee as this discussion carries forward.

Thank you for allowing this organization to put forth our viewpoints on SB 231. We respectfully request that the Environment Committee's decision-making process be influenced by scientific fact and consensus. Let us not condemn an industry and this state's balance of trade without having evidential proof and viable alternatives that create opportunities for pollinator recovery and the continued viability of Connecticut's agricultural economy.

Sincerely,



Susan G. Pronovost
Executive Director