



**Testimony before the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Relating to Pollinator Health
By Jeff Stone, Executive Director
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Chair Witt, members of the committee, I am Jeff Stone and I serve as the Executive Director of the Oregon Association of Nurseries. I welcome the opportunity to provide some thoughts on House Bill 4194 relating to pollinator health.

Oregon nursery industry background

The nursery and greenhouse industry is the state's largest agricultural sector and represents the nation's second largest nursery state with over \$744 million in sales. Nearly 75% of nursery stock grown in our state leaves our borders – with over half reaching markets east of the Mississippi River. Nursery association members represent wholesale and Christmas tree growers, retailers and greenhouse operations.

Pollinator health is critical to the nursery and greenhouse industry

The Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) conducted an investigation over the pollinator deaths in four locations during the summer of 2013. The temporary rule restricting the use of pesticides containing the active ingredients dinotefuran and imidacloprid were put in place until late December 2014. Starting 2014 the department has imposed label language prohibiting the use of products containing dinotefuran and imidacloprid for use on trees in the *Tilia* genus, which include linden and basswood trees.

In November 2013, then OAN President Carson Lord testified before this committee to express the industry's support of the ODA action and the industry's reservations regarding an outright ban of neonicotinoids. This chemical class is relatively safe to both human and pollinators and is used as part of pest mitigation by our greenhouse and nursery members. The association did extensive outreach to retail, greenhouse and field grown members to increase awareness of the pollinator issue as well assess the use of the chemical class and the number of licensed pesticide applicators.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has not followed Europe's lead by suspending or banning the use of neonicotinoid pesticides. Instead, the EPA has been active on the pollinator issue by increasing the level of funding for research into integrated pest management, which has resulted in a reduction in the use of pesticides. While there is a push by Congressman Earl Blumenauer to shorten the evaluation of this pesticide class, the scientific link between neonics and pollinator deaths is still not determined. Several studies, including a National Academy of Sciences study on the loss of pollinators, chaired by University of Illinois entomologist May

Berenbaum, indicated that the science is dubious that banning this class of chemicals would have any positive effect.

While six states have made efforts to protect pollinator health, it is critical that the State of Oregon's efforts be science-based, and include stakeholders from industry, the environment and academia. To date, Representative Jeff Reardon has brought together a wide array of interests to discuss common concerns over pollinator health. This is a positive development of an important conversation between a diverse set of stakeholders.

Science and reason should go hand in hand

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and ODA invested research dollars into pollinator health. It is timely that we work with Oregon State University and interested parties to examine how to study this issue further and create a communication effort for the general public and industry. It is critical that Oregon moves in a reasoned manner to evaluate trends in pollinator health, including the use of best management practices. We are working with our national association, AmericanHort, to work with various chemical and registrant associations on the neonic issue and to conduct a survey of use at a national level. We believe an expanded look at colony collapse of pollinators should be conducted and the nursery and greenhouse industry should be a reasoned voice in the discussion.

Willingness to work with stakeholders to protect pollinators

House Bill 4139 could have taken a negative approach and pitch interest group against interest group. I am grateful that a constructive dialogue has been created and we support HB 4139 and the Dash-2 amendments.

The OAN is committed to working with the legislature and a myriad of partners to combat the challenges we face with pollinator health. It is in the nursery and greenhouse industry's economic and stewardship interest to lead by example and work toward sensible solutions to resolve the issues that confront us.

Thank you for your time and attention.