

From: Kenda Swartz
To: [SENR Exhibits](#)
Subject: SB 929, the Oregon Pollinator Protection Act - Letter of Support
Date: Thursday, March 30, 2017 11:18:11 AM

Dear Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources,

My name is Kenda Swartz Pepper. I am from Jacksonville, Oregon, and I presented a testimony this past Monday, March 27, in support of SB 929, The Oregon Pollinator Protection Act. I'm so grateful for the opportunity to have spoken. I was the one who read a poem, a little unconventional, I know. My nerves and my concern about using someone else's time kept me from reading the research and stats I wanted to share. So, I'm writing you now, again, to share my poem and the other information, which I believe is pertinent to this bill.

The Last Bee

by Kenda Swartz Pepper

She rested gently in his soft, young hand

In awe, he stared, at a smallness so grand.

What have we done? In earnest he pleaded

They forgot, she whispered, how much we are needed.

But I don't understand, he cried through his tears

You're not to blame, she said, it's been occurring for years.

How can I help? His angst ever-growing.

You cannot, she responded, it's just too late for *knowing*.

You see, wisdom, too often, arrives too late

Adults, long ago, determined my fate.

Sadly, humans are blind regarding toxicity
Their willful lack of insight results in complicity.

Be kind and wise, she tried to explain
Please ensure that my species has not died in vain.

Will you think of me, I mean, after I depart?
He answered in silence, by way of broken heart.

She fell to her side, Struggling to upright
The senseless poisons, Winning the fight.

Fragility replaced a once lively existence
There was no cure for her failing resistance

Weakened and frail, the bee acquiesced
The child bargained and pleaded, trying his best.

One final buzz on delicate wings...
The last bee on earth no longer sings.

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There is growing evidence linking neonicotinoid pesticides to the honeybee decline known as colony collapse disorder. Yet we don't know the full negative effect of these pesticides on our **native** bees, who are more efficient pollinators than honeybees. For example 7 mason bees can do the job of over 500 honeybees when it comes to pollinating one fruit tree. But because native bees are not kept commercially, we know their numbers are in decline, we do not fully know to what extent...until there are so few, they become endangered or have disappeared completely off the face of earth. Right now researchers are finding that more than 700 wild bee species in North America are headed toward extinction -- that's more than half of the bee species tested.

And Monarch butterflies who have been on earth for 175 million years have declined 80%

since the early 1990's. What was once 700 million Monarch butterflies is now 140 million. Putting that into perspective:

If you compress the entire existence of butterflies into just my lifetime of 50 years, then this precipitous decline of 80% has occurred over the last 3 minutes and 45 seconds. This would be considered a crisis of colossal proportions, but because it's been insidiously occurring over the last 25-27 years, slowly chipping away at the one of the most universally recognized and adored insects in the world and also a symbol of natural beauty, we are not reacting in kind. If we were to witness the decimation of 560 million butterflies in 3 minutes and 45 seconds, we would take note, and we would take action. This is real.

Canada has announced plans to ban imidacloprid, one of the most widely used neonicotinoids in the world. Countries around the world have banned neonics and several US states, including Maryland, the first to take action, have also banned it. Even North Carolina, not exactly a hub of environmental stewardship, has presented a bill to ban neonics. I think Oregon is in a better position than North Carolina to step up for our pollinators. This bill is for residential use despite some of the farmer testimonies we heard on Monday. In my opinion, like what other countries have done, neonicotinoids should be banned for *all* use. This tip-toeing around the powerful influence of agrochemical lobbyists is annoying at best. The UK had a ban and while researchers are currently studying the effects of the ban on *bees*, they have discovered that this ban had no impact on crop yield despite what the agrochemical companies claimed would happen. What does this mean? The neonicotinoids are used to combat pests that eat crops, because farmers don't want to lose any of their yield. Banning the neonics for the last three years has had no impact on yield with UK farmers.

American farmers who use harmful pesticides will have to adapt. Not only because of consumer demand, which is shifting, but they are killing the very soil that their livelihoods depend upon. They are caught in a perpetual cycle of increasing use of synthetic chemicals because the soil is unable to sustain increasing toxic inputs. They will one day have to shift their practices and adapt or be out of business. But for now, let's get it out of the hands of the average citizen who does not follow the law of the label and seems to be disconnected from the reality of their actions on their natural world. Just yesterday, a sunny afternoon around 12:30 PM with bees flying all around, I drove by a resident of my town who was out in his yard spraying.

For now and for future generations, please. Do the right thing – for our pollinators, for human health, for food sovereignty, and not for the agrochemical companies who only care about their bottom line and nothing else.

Thank you.

**Kenda Swartz Pepper**

“And then the day came  
when the risk to remain tight in a bud  
was more painful than  
the risk it took to blossom.”

~Anais Nin

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