



OREGON
ASSOCIATION OF
NURSERIES

**Testimony before the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee
Senate Bill 929 – requires the ODA to classify neonicotinoids as restricted use pesticides**

By Mark Bigej, President, Oregon Association of Nurseries

April 12, 2017

Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Olsen, members of the committee, my name is Mark Bigej and I serve as the president of the Oregon Association of Nurseries. The OAN opposes Senate Bill 929, with the proposed dash-2 amendment– which places unnecessary mandates relating to pollinators and the use of insecticides on nursery retailers.

The association appreciates the significant movement by the committee to amend SB 929. However the dash-2 amendments places requirements that any retailer selling neonicotinoids be a “licensed pesticide dealer.” To become a licensed dealer in Oregon, you submit a fee (currently \$75) and an application to ODA. The OAN views this bill as unfair fee for those, including myself, who grow and sell nursery products.

SB 929-2 remains a bad bill and would harm education oriented retail nurseries

As a co-owner of a third generation business - Al's Garden Center and Greenhouses, LLC - and President of the Board of the Oregon Association of Nurseries – I wanted to express my continued disappointment and opposition to SB 929.

As both a retailer and a grower, neonicotinoids are a very important class of insecticides that we use to mitigate insect problems. Science has proven that this class of insecticides, when used properly, is more effective in controlling target pests and safer to humans than other less desirable, less selective insecticides. We rely on this class of chemicals as part of an integrated pest management strategy. Greatly regulating the use of this class of insecticides would leave us no option than to use increased applications of substances that are less selective, not as effective, and more harmful to humans.

I am also opposed to requiring retail stores to obtain special certification at a fee to be able to sell products that contain neonicotinoids. The retail stores that handle these products are critical in educating the general public as to the correct and responsible use of these products, and do so willingly. Imposing increased regulations and fees upon this group is unfair and uncalled for. Retailers such as ourselves are proactive in educating people on the benefits of bees, how to improve pollinator habitat, and the importance of

responsible use of all insecticides - not just neonicotinoids. It is unclear to me as to why this group should bear the burden of a fee and increased regulation. This bill and the dash-2 amendments inappropriately target merchants carrying these products and goes against the hard work done by the pollinator task force just a few short years ago.

The Nursery and Greenhouse industry is a committed leader on pollinator health

The OAN and many other organizations have been working hard over the past several years to educate consumers and agricultural sectors, prioritize research and incentives, and bring together agricultural, beekeepers, garden clubs and conservation groups to engage on increasing the populations of native and honey bees along with monarch butterflies.

Pollinating bees are important to sustaining life on our planet. They support our food chain and many plants are dependent on bees for production. The horticulture industry is committed to ensuring their sustainability because of their important role in the life cycle of plants and humans.

The state took affirmative action in 2014 with House Bill 4139 – which created a task force of stakeholders to collaborate and create a science-based approach to pollinator health which would lead to a better solution. The “Report to the Oregon Legislative Assembly” by the Task Force on Pollinator Health was released in November 2014. Four main consensus items emerged that received the support of stakeholders. In 2015, the OAN and others advocated for the creation of three bills to enact the recommendations of the task force. They are below:

- I. Oregon should develop a strong, effective outreach and education strategy on pollinator health, including best management practices. (House Bill 3362).
- II. Oregon should fully fund a state-of-the-art bee health diagnostic facility at Oregon State University. (House Bill 3360)
- III. An integrated pollinator health research plan should be developed and funded to improve understanding of the many issues affecting pollinator health. (House Bill 3361)
- IV. A sustainable revenue stream to fund the proposed outreach, education and research programs is needed.

The OAN will work hard to urge stakeholders to roll up their sleeves and work with our land grant university (Oregon State University), legislators, and state agencies to determine the most appropriate paths forward. It is critical we work with interested parties to examine how to study this issue further and create a communication effort for the general public and industry. We all benefit when we move in a reasoned manner to evaluate trends in pollinator health, including the use of best management practices.

SB 929 takes an ill-advised shortcut and is bad policy. The committee is respectfully urged to vote against this bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration.