

March 4, 2018

Dear Senators Kennedy, Miner, Demicco and members of the Environment Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the Norwalk River Watershed Association regarding the changes made to SB 104, An Act Prohibiting The Use Of Residential Automatic Pesticide Misting Systems, to limit exposure to pesticides. We feel strongly that changing the bill from one requiring a ban on mosquito misters to one requiring a 20-foot setback from property lines for their use puts our community at risk and threatens the goals of *Public Act No. 16-17, AN ACT CONCERNING POLLINATOR HEALTH,* passed in 2016. I am writing to ask that you restore the original language of the bill and support its passage in order to protect public health and the health of our environment including water quality and wildlife, especially pollinators.

In the wake of *Public Act No. 16-17*, one aspect of environmental health that NRWA and our 1000+ network of active participants is focusing on is the alarming decline in pollinator populations. Colony collapse syndrome, the US Fish and Wildlife Service’s finding of a 90% decline in monarch butterfly populations since 1998, and other studies showing declines greater than 70% in all flying insects, have brought to our attention the need to use pesticides in a responsible manner. We have learned that the first rule should be to apply pesticides only when pests are present. The notion of a timed mister runs counter to this very basic principle. Even the American Mosquito Control Association discourages the use of automatic pesticide misting systems because "they are not consistent with sound practices to promote public and environmental health."

In the Norwalk River watershed towns, over a dozen conservation organizations have come together to address the community’s growing concerns about the dramatic declines in pollinator populations. We have established a “Pollinator Pathway” which connects public space and private property to create a corridor of safe habitat for threatened pollinator populations. Residents join the pathway by pledging to avoid pesticide use and to plant native nectar and caterpillar host plants and trees. Our project has grown beyond the watershed towns of Ridgefield, Wilton, Weston and Norwalk to include Danbury, Bethel and Newtown so far.

Protecting pollinators is an issue that your constituents care deeply about. Last month, the Pollinator Pathway steering committee was asked to present our Pollinator Pathway plan to the *CT Native Plants for Pollinators and Wildlife Working Group* which is a task force created as part of the passage of *Public Act No. 16-17**, AN ACT CONCERNING POLLINATOR HEALTH.* We are proud to be working with scientists from the CT Agriculture Experiment Station now to promote our Pathway idea in other areas of the state. We are coming together at the community and the state levels to address this problem, and we need our state representatives to keep up with the latest science on the issue and to work with us instead of against us. In passing Public Act No 16-17, CT recognized the vital importance to agriculture and human health of protecting pollinators. How can the environment committee justify following an act like the Pollinator Health bill with an action such as the altering of SB 104? Allowing pesticide misters which threaten all flying insects as well as birds, water quality and human health, runs counter to the intentions of the state’s *Public Act No. 16-17, AN ACT CONCERNING POLLINATOR HEALTH.*CT is investing in planting pollinator plants along the highways and supporting a task force of experts to address the problem of declining pollinator populations. We believe the environment committee has a responsibility to support that effort.

I heard testimony on February 23rd, as you did, from Nancy Alderman and others regarding the fact that the EPA acknowledges these misters are dangerous, but that they do not have the authority to regulate them. We learned that Consumer Protection warns not to buy them because they are dangerous and that our own CT DEEP has said they know they are extremely problematic. For these reasons, we look to our state representatives to pass a bill that provides sensible protections.

New York State has prohibited these pesticide misters because they "can be dangerous to public health and the environment.” Please reconsider the altering of bill 104. If you are interested in getting a sense of how much your constituents care about this issue, I invite you to visit our website, Pollintor-pathway.org or one of the town Facebook pages such as @Wilton Pollinator Pathway. We are “abuzz” with concern for bees, butterflies and birds. This is an issue we care deeply about. Please support our efforts.

Sincerely,

Louise Washer

Norwalk River Watershed Association

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