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March 17, 2017

Dear Representatives,

I am writing in support of HB 19 to restrict the use of neonicotinoids in Alaskan agriculture. I was born and raised in Alaska, and my family farmed in Palmer when I was young on the land that is now the muskox farm. After receiving my Ph.D. in Integrative Biology, I joined the faculty at UAA in 2000. I taught and conducted research at UAA until last summer, when I moved to Flagstaff for a professorship in ecotoxicology at Northern Arizona University. I am still actively engaged in ecotoxicology research in Alaska, including in the Bering Sea region, the Aleutians, and southcentral Alaska. I also continue to train graduate students from Alaska in my laboratory.

Neonicotinoids currently account for 17% of worldwide insecticide sales. The advantage of these chemicals is that their toxicity for mammals, birds and fish is relatively low, though there is concern about their effect on cerebellar neurons in mammals. The chief problem with neonicotinoids is that they are thought to be the leading cause of the current worldwide decline in bees. This decline, known as colony collapse disorder, has serious implications for agriculture and therefore food security and the farming economy. Agriculture in Alaska is likely to expand with climate warming and it would be prudent to protect this important sector of the Alaskan economy.

Sincerely,

Frank von Hippel
Professor
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