

Dear Representative Drummond,

I am writing to urge your support of House Bill 19. Bees and other pollinators are declining at alarming rates, and the science continues to link their losses to the use of nicotine-based insecticides called neonicotinoids. We need to take swift action by suspending the use of these chemicals in Alaska.

I work for Catholic Social Services with Refugee Assistance and Immigration Services as the Refugee Agriculture Partnership Program Coordinator in Anchorage, Alaska. I have years of farming experience from organic farming in St. Louis, Missouri to reforestation and vegetable production in Guinea, West Africa as a United States Peace Corps Agroforestry Extension Volunteer to my current position coordinating a community garden producing Alaskan grown vegetables and flowers at Fresh International Gardens with the refugee community.

Bees and other pollinators are vital to food production. Successful pollination results in the production of fruit and fertile seeds, allowing plants to reproduce. Without pollinators, much of our fruits and vegetables will not produce. Nearly 75% of all flowering plants rely on pollinators for fertilization.

Many studies have added substantial weight to the growing body of evidence showing that widespread use of neonicotinoids is linked to Colony Collapse Disorder. When exposed to these neonicotinoids, bees become disoriented due to neurological damage, are unable to find their way back home to their hive and die from exhaustion. One study found that colonies exposed to neonicotinoids produced 85 percent fewer queens, meaning the creation of 85 percent fewer hives. Neonicotinoids kill pollinators, resulting in a loss of birds due to a reduction in insect populations. The use of neonicotinoids is destroying our agricultural system and should be stopped immediately.

I urge you to support and pass this bill today.

Thank you.

Jesse Richardville

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