

## SB22-xxx: CONCERNING HEALTHY POLLINATOR HABITAT THAT PROTECTS HUMAN HEALTH

When we protect healthy and diverse habitats, we protect the health of people and pollinators.

**Sponsors:** Senator Sonya Jaquez Lewis and Representatives Cathy Kipp

**What are pollinators?** Pollinators are animals - mostly insects, but also some birds, bats and a few others - that move pollen from the male to female parts of a flower, which is essential to the reproduction of over 85% of the world's flowering plants - the foundation of life on earth. Pollinators ensure that many of the plants we eat can produce fruit and vegetables from our Palisade peaches to our Pueblo Chiles. Native pollinators provide an estimated economic value to U.S. agriculture of \$3 billion/year. Colorado relies on pollinators, and our unique geography and climates mean we have a large diversity of pollinator species serving key roles in our ecosystems. These pollinators are at risk. Many factors contribute to our concern about pollinator health that also affect people. In fact, the potential decline of pollinators has direct consequences for human survival. Habitat loss and fragmentation; inadequate food sources, pesticide impacts, disease and parasites all weaken pollinators, but the combination is a perfect storm leading to precipitous declines of many insects with repercussions for entire ecosystems.

While pesticides play a role in agriculture and can effectively kill insects, weeds or other pests, these chemicals also harm beneficial insects like pollinators. Additionally, there is substantial evidence that pesticides pose a significant risk to people, particularly children, as well as to non-target organisms, such as pollinators, birds and other wildlife. Pesticides can pollute water, disrupt ecosystems, contribute to biodiversity loss, degrade soil health, reduce soil's capacity to store carbon, and destroy habitat. Pesticides also contribute directly to the underlying causes of some aspects of climate change.

**Solution:** While Colorado is home to more than 950 species of bees, 250 species of butterflies and hundreds of birds and small animals which provide critical pollinator services, Colorado does not have a comprehensive plan to ensure we protect these species. Colorado lacks resources to work across our agencies to ensure adequate planning, protection, and coordination for pollinators and there's insufficient capacity to protect human health as we consider pesticide use. SB22-xxx will make strides to address pesticide risks and protection of people, pollinators and soils.

- Conduct a pollinator health study and develop recommendations on how to address the challenges associated with the threats to pollinator health.
- Create a grant program at the Colorado Department of Agriculture that would allow producers to acquire seeds voluntarily that are non-coated. Currently, most seeds used in traditional agriculture production are coated in neonicotinoids that move throughout the plant into all tissues, including nectar and pollen, and also migrate into soil and water, harming aquatic food webs.
- Allow local governments to make choices about pesticide use in their own communities. Preemption prevents local governments from using their unique knowledge and risk tolerance to respond quickly and effectively to protect their water supplies, residents and pollinators from harm.<sup>1</sup> Federal and state laws serve as a floor or baseline of protection. It is prudent to ensure local communities the freedom to rely on this information to adopt more stringent standards of protection as they see fit.

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<sup>1</sup> Centner, T. J., & Heric, D. C. (2019). Anti-community state pesticide preemption laws prevent local governments from protecting people from harm. *International Journal of Agricultural Sustainability*, 17(2), 118–126. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14735903.2019.1568814>  
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- Add Neonicotinoids as a restricted use pesticide (RUP). A RUP is a pesticide that is not available for use by the general public. Neonicotinoids are a group of insecticides that harm pollinators and other animals and commonly contaminate urban streams. This policy would limit some non-agricultural uses.
- Limit pesticide use on school grounds to protect pollinators that use this space and to protect our children whose health is at risk; [“Epidemiologic evidence demonstrates associations between early life exposure to pesticides and pediatric cancers, decreased cognitive function, and behavioral problems.”](#)<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> <https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/130/6/e1757/30399/Pesticide-Exposure-in-Children>

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