

Members of the Committee,

My name is Tim Hiatt, my family operates 19,000 hives in the southwest part of the state. I'm a second generation beekeeper and have been working with landowners to place bees properly since 1979. I am opposed to SB 2134.

When I spread our hives across more than 300 locations every year, I place them after consulting with and getting permission from landowners. I enjoy the friendships built over the years and wouldn't do anything to jeopardize these relationships. Because I am on their land with their permission, the landowner has the final say on where the bees go. I must put them where they want. It is an intrusive restriction on the rights of the landowner to not allow the landowner to place bees where they want me to put them.

Our state leads the nation in honey production. A rule restricting where bees can be placed will decrease our honey production because in many places, the only available place is relatively close to roads. Not only will beekeeper income decrease, but economic activity generated in our state will also decrease.

With the snow we have received, I hope spring continues wet. But with the good wet spring come muddy conditions. The farther I have to go off road, the more likely I am to tear up section lines, put ruts in pastures, and damage livestock and honey bee forage. The less distance I have to travel off road, the less these damages are. It is better to have locations relatively near roads to minimize such damage. Common sense and the wishes of the landowner should govern where bees are placed, not a one-size-fits-all rule.

The building where we process the honey harvested from the hives is less than 1/4 mile from the road. This is also where we gather our hives before winter. Were this bill to become law, our having bees at our building would become illegal and the state would be responsible for moving thousands of hives, which is a perverse consequence.

The best way to resolve issues of this kind is to speak with the landowner or beekeeper directly. If there is no satisfaction in that route, law enforcement can be involved on the basis of creating a nuisance. Such laws are already on the books and would address the few times non-cooperative beekeepers or landowners refuse to place bees sensibly.

A single, extremely restrictive standard for the whole state is a massive overreach and would be very damaging to beekeepers statewide who have good relationships with their landowners already. Please do not support SB 2134.

Tim Hiatt
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