

Testimony to Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee February 6th, 2025,
10:15am

Honorable Committee Members,

My name is Micheal A Kemp, and am a 100% disabled veteran from West Fargo, North Dakota. I struggle daily with severe PTSD from my military service. I'm here today to strongly urge you not to pass Senate Bill 2343, which would prohibit beehive placement within one-half mile of state and federal highways.

Traditional PTSD treatments weren't enough for me. Through my VA support group, I discovered the Heroes to Hives program, a free beekeeping education program for veterans. The simple act of tending my hives has become an essential part of my therapy. The rhythmic hum of the bees calms my hypervigilance. The methodical hive inspections give me focus when anxiety threatens to overwhelm. On my worst days, just sitting quietly near my hives helps ground me in the present moment.

As a 100% disabled veteran, I need my hives to be easily accessible. The proposed half-mile restriction from highways would force me to relocate them to remote areas I cannot reliably reach, especially on days when my PTSD symptoms are severe. The 48-hour removal requirement in this bill shows no consideration for disabled veterans like myself who physically cannot relocate hives that quickly.

Through Heroes to Hives, I've found purpose again. The program has trained over 15,000 veterans, teaching us not just about beekeeping, but about our continued role in protecting our nation's food security. However, these valuable skills mean nothing if Senate Bill 2343 prevents us from maintaining our hives in accessible locations.

The therapeutic benefits of beekeeping aren't just anecdotal - they're a daily reality in my PTSD management. Each morning I can check my hives gives me a reason to push through. Every successful day tending my bees builds back the confidence that PTSD stripped away.

I understand the committee may have concerns, but I urge you to consider how Section 4.1-16-08.1 would devastate disabled veterans who rely on accessible beekeeping for mental health therapy. This isn't about commercial interests - it's about preserving a vital therapeutic tool that has given many of us a path to healing.

I ask you to vote no on Senate Bill 2343.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully, Michael A. Kemp 100% Disabled Veteran West Fargo, North Dakota