

Members of the Committee,

My name is Adam Pachl. I am a hobby beekeeper, as well as a former Apiary Inspector of 6 years for the North Dakota Department of Agriculture (NDDA). I am writing to express my opposition to Senate Bill 2343.

Like many people that will express their opinions on this bill, I have dedicated my life to honey bees. I still work to help beekeepers maintain healthy colonies and communicate daily with beekeepers, both in North Dakota and across the United States. Having been an inspector, I am in a unique position in that I have worked with beekeepers in every part of the state and have seen different practices and management styles. I have worked with beekeepers that range from one colony to over 20,000, and no two beekeepers do everything the same way. I have a unique understanding of how this bill will impact beekeepers of every size. I am also intimately familiar with how NDDA manages its inspection program, so I know the implications this will have on how the state is able to serve both beekeepers and the public. I also understand how this will impact farmers that may rely on honey bees to pollinate their crops. Finally, I keep two colonies of bees myself, as well as volunteering to maintain colonies for education at the Dakota Zoo and the Gateway to Science in Bismarck.

It is no secret that North Dakota is a leader in the beekeeping industry by almost every metric, but this bill would make keeping bees in North Dakota at any level much more difficult and put the industry at risk, even at a national level. Not allowing bees to be placed within one-half mile from a state or federal road will impact over 10% of the apiaries that were registered in North Dakota in 2024. It will disproportionately impact hobby beekeepers, or those with 50 or fewer colonies. Most hobby beekeepers in the state actually keep fewer than 10 colonies, but over 1/3 of hobby beekeepers will no longer be able to keep their bees where they are registered under this bill, and many of those locations are registered in their own yards, including a location of my own. There are also several hives kept for educational purposes in the state that would be deemed illegal under this bill, including at the Dakota Zoo and Gateway to Science in Bismarck, which is owned by the NDDA.

In addition to their normal apiaries, commercial beekeepers need places to load and unload their semis when bees arrive in the spring and leave in the fall. They need areas that a semi can easily access and that forklifts can safely operate in and load heavy pallets, all while not damaging the landscape around them. These areas are often near the approaches of highways, and removing them would do great damage to the industry as a whole. On top of this, many commercial beekeepers may use areas around their honey extraction facilities, which are often near highways as well. These are buildings that they

have invested substantial amounts of money in and are a central part of their operation. Some beekeepers are even constructing climate-controlled buildings to keep their bees in until it is time to send them to other states for pollination. This is cutting edge technology and practice for honey bee health and welfare, but some of these multimillion-dollar facilities would be rendered illegal under this bill.

Considering honey bee biology, foraging and flight patterns, this bill will do little to impact bees flying across roads in the state. Honey bees can fly over three miles in search of flowers and water, and a swarm in search of a new home can travel over a mile. If bees are placed one-half mile from a road all it will accomplish is making people feel better about not seeing them, but they will still travel across that roadway in search of the flowers and water they want to get to.

When I was an inspector, it was not uncommon for me to work 60+ hours and drive 1,500 miles per week, from the middle of May through the end of September, just to get the work done that was required under the Apiary Inspection Program. It was a struggle to find seasonal employees to help enforce the regulations, and I was too busy conducting in-hive inspections to spend much time patrolling and looking for violations. If I found something along the way I would document it, but I did not have much time to go out of my way looking for violations. It would take multiple new employees to be able to enforce this law. The NDDA Apiary Inspection Program is already one of the most advanced in the nation, is well respected by the beekeepers in the state and is often looked at by other states as a model when they want to develop a new program, or when they want to add to or remodel an existing program. They do an incredible job helping to manage relationships between beekeepers and the general public and trying to mitigate the incredible number of hives that North Dakota has, and SB 2343 would undo years of hard work that has gone into building those relationships.

There are further questions of how this would be enforced. There highways that would fall under this bill that run through tribal lands, but as an inspector I stayed away from tribal lands due to the ambiguity regarding who had authority in those areas. When a complaint inevitably comes from those areas in it is unclear who will be responsible for enforcing it. There will also inevitably be times where people will complain and want this enforced where the hives are not in violation, people will be upset, and it will create some sort of problem or conflict.

Finally, speaking as a landowner, there are many crops grown in North Dakota that benefit from being pollinated by honey bees. Canola specifically can see a yield increase of 13-46% if honey bees are present. Sunflowers can see even higher yield increases, depending on the variety. But beekeepers are at the mercy of the landowner for where the bees can be

placed. The landowners want them in a place where they are out of the way, which is often right by the approach to the field. If that field is along a highway, then that is where they want the bees.

In summary, if this bill passes, all it will accomplish is telling residents and landowners what they cannot do on their land, telling farmers what they cannot do on their land, and harm an industry in which North Dakota leads the nation and is critical to our food production not only in our state, but nationwide. For all the reasons listed above, SB 2343 cannot pass.

Adam Pacht

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