



MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT ***BIRDS AND BEES PROTECTION ACT***

S.1856A– HOYLMAN-SIGAL

A.7640– Glick

DESCRIPTION: Bans the use of neonic-treated corn, wheat, and soybean seeds and ornamental/turf applications

JUSTIFICATION

Pollinators (including but not limited to bees, beetles, butterflies, moths, and hummingbirds) are an indispensable component of our food web. There is substantial scientific evidence indicating that neonicotinoid pesticides (aka “neonics”) are a significant contributor to the unprecedented decline in pollinator health documented across our state and the nation. New York beekeepers now typically lose an astounding 40% or more of their hives every year. Neonics persist in soil for months, and in some circumstances, even years after being applied. At high doses, certain neonics can be highly lethal to bees and other pollinators, while causing difficulties in navigation and foraging, and impacting the immune system at sub-lethal levels.

Neonic contamination of New York’s waters is widespread, threatening our health and environment. A U.S. Fish and Wildlife study from 2018 found neonics in New York streams “in excess of toxicity and regulatory thresholds.” In 2016, extensive testing of New York surface water by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) found the neonic imidacloprid in nearly 40% of the samples. USGS monitoring of the Long Island aquifer that same year found imidacloprid to be one of the most frequently detected pesticides.

A recent report by Cornell University found that vast majority of neonics going into New York’s environment either: (1) provide little-to-no benefits to users; or (2) are easily replaced with safer alternatives. That means the heart of New York’s neonic problem can be addressed by restricting these needless uses, likely saving users money without resulting in a switch to more harmful pesticides. This legislation will:

- **Ban neonic-treated corn, soybean, and wheat seeds**, which account for about three-quarters of the neonics used in New York agriculture. The bill allows the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to suspend the ban for a particular type of seed if it finds that that untreated seed is not commercially available or that the purchase of non-treated seed would impose “undue financial hardship to agricultural producers”.
- **Ban ornamental and turf (AKA, “cosmetic”) neonic uses** commonplace on lawns, golf courses, and manicured corporate gardens across the state. The bill contains DEC-controlled

CITIZENS CAMPAIGN FOR THE ENVIRONMENT SUPPORTS
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exemption for any “environmental emergency” where no other less harmful pesticide or pest management practice would be effective. This exemption period cannot exceed one year.

- **Require a DEC study** in consultation with the Department of Agriculture and Markets (DAM), Cornell University and SUNY ESF, to identify “practicable and feasible” alternatives to neonic products.
- **Set effective dates** the ban on ornamental uses takes effect on July 1, 2025. The ban on neonic treated corn, soybean, and wheat seeds takes effect on January 1, 2027. The DEC study result must be completed by January 1, 2026.