



LEAD for Pollinators, Inc.

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July 26, 2020

Secretary Kathleen A. Theoharides
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900
Boston, MA 02114

RE: Mosquito Control for the Twenty-First Century Task Force

Dear Secretary Theoharides,

LEAD for Pollinators, Inc. supports the nomination of the Massachusetts Beekeepers Association (Mass Bee) and their appointed representative for the ***Mosquito Control for the Twenty-First Century Task Force*** that was created by S.2757 and H.4851, *An Act to Mitigate Arbovirus in the Commonwealth*.

Section 3 of the bill addresses the formation and membership of this task force: *“1 of whom shall be a representative of a statewide organization representing beekeepers or groups concerned about pollinators”*.

Mass Bee is the only statewide organization that represents beekeepers of the Commonwealth including backyard, sideliner, commercial beekeepers and county beekeeping organizations. Mass Bee is in a unique position to advocate for and inform the Task Force of the concerns of beekeepers statewide who are impacted by mosquito spraying, and has the network in place to make sure all beekeeper concerns are addressed. Mass Bee can ensure that the activities of the Task Force are communicated effectively to beekeepers and pollinator groups.

Mass Bee has been a strong advocate for both native pollinators and managed bees and has worked to protect them through advocacy, legislation and pollinator protection plans. As producers of specialty crops, beekeepers are uniquely impacted by Mosquito Spraying. Pesticide spraying can impact bees directly by killing them and indirectly by the chemicals that contaminate our honey, pollen, royal jelly, bees wax and propolis. These chemicals risk a beekeepers' ability to export to countries with strict limits on pesticide residues in human food and additives (honey), as is the case with Canada. Bees can also suffer sublethal effects from pesticides which do not kill them outright but instead impair bees'

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health and vitality causing harm to the colony over time. Mass Bee is knowledgeable about commercial agricultural concerns as well as toxicity concerns of beekeepers and pollinator groups across the Commonwealth.

All pesticides used for mosquito spraying are highly toxic to bees and pollinators. Pesticides sprayed to kill mosquitoes can wipe out a beekeepers' entire operation of hundreds of hives and devastate native pollinator populations with just one spraying event. Mass Bee has members who have lost hives to spraying and we can communicate their concerns to the Task Force. Mass Bee can communicate to beekeepers and pollinator groups the complex management issues before the Task Force.

Beekeeping is the livelihood of many beekeepers in the Commonwealth. It is therefore imperative that they be represented on this Task Force by Mass Bee as they are uniquely suited to address their needs. Honey bees are vital for crop pollination in Massachusetts, already a declining bee population, has serious repercussions on our food supply. According to the American Beekeeping Federation "Honey bees contribute nearly \$30 billion to the value of U.S. crop production. This contribution, made by managed honey bees, comes in the form of increased yields and superior quality crops for growers and American consumers. A healthy beekeeping industry is invaluable to a healthy U.S. agricultural economy. Many of the country's crops would not exist without honey bees. Crop yield and quality would be greatly reduced without honey bee pollination. Some crops, including blueberries, cranberries, apples and cherries, depend on honeybees for pollination." Many of our beekeepers pollinate local farms with their bee colonies and Mass Bee knows how to advocate for these issues to maintain food stability our state.

Mass Bee is uniquely suited to address factors related to the management and behavior of honey bees and pollinators and to make sure concerns are addressed that would not be known by those not in the business of bees. Some of these behaviors include bees clustering outside of hives at night due to thermoregulation of the hive. This makes them more vulnerable to being killed by mosquito spraying. Beekeepers use different equipment and different management styles for varroa control and honey production which influence how the bees behave at night and may make them more vulnerable to being impacted by a spraying event. Needs like these can only be addressed by Mass Bee whose members practice these management options.

Mass Bee represents beekeepers who are stakeholders in the mosquito spraying process. Our beekeepers can suffer both economic, emotional and substantial losses from the effects of these pesticides on our bees. As the product label states *"This product is highly toxic to bees exposed to direct treatment on blooming crops or weeds. Do not apply this product or allow it to drift to blooming crops or weeds while bees are actively visiting the treatment area."* Native pollinators as well as honey bees are susceptible to poisoning for days after spraying through contaminated nectar and pollen. Monitoring managed beehives by the Mass Bee 5000 affiliate members will provide valuable supplemental information on the effects of spraying on our bees and the more vulnerable native pollinators.

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Mass Bee has a network of local and national groups we collaborate with and many of our beekeepers are also active within including Plymouth County Beekeepers Association, Norfolk County Beekeepers Association, Essex County Beekeepers Association, Worcester County Beekeepers Association, Bristol County Beekeepers Association, Boston Area Beekeepers, Hampden County Beekeepers Association, Northern Berkshire Beekeepers Association, Barnstable County Beekeepers Association, Franklin County Beekeepers Association, Middlesex County Beekeepers Association, Eastern Apicultural Society of North America, **LEAD for Pollinators**, MDAR, UMass, NOFA/Mass, Farm Bureau, Mass Audubon, PEER, Ipswich River Watershed Association, Jones River Watershed, Toxics Action Center, CLF, OARS, Mass Rivers Alliance, MACC, EcoHealth Advocates, Mass. Sierra Club, Clean Water Action, Friends of the Earth, Regeneration Mass, Beyond Pesticides, Land Conservation groups, and Trustees of Reservations to name just a few.

Beekeepers have historically been inadequately represented at the state level. Failure to include Mass Bee on the task force would only serve to further exacerbate this situation.

LEAD for Pollinators, Inc. supports the nomination of a representative from Mass Bee to be appointed to the Twenty-First Century Task Force. Mass Bee will select a qualified task force representative from its membership who will meet the requirements, and serve the Task Force well.

Thank you,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michele Colopy". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Michele Colopy, Executive Director