



January 30, 2020

Thank you Chairman Cowles and members of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy for allowing me to testify in support of SB-617 before you today. This bill seeks to address the declining pollinator populations in our state, by creating a task force on native pollinator health.

Without question, Wisconsin's agricultural and economic capabilities are largely interconnected with the well-being of natural pollinators. In Wisconsin, pollinators contribute to over \$55 million in annual crop production, and \$3.5 million in commodities. Yet, most importantly, pollinators are responsible for one in every three bites of food we consume. However, during the past 30-years, our nation and state have seen unprecedented pollinator declines as a result of invasive species, human development, and mismanagement of public lands.

It is very clear that many Wisconsinites depend on our pollinators to ensure their traditional ways of life. Unfortunately, these individuals are already feeling the economic pressure of declining pollinators. For the past three years, Wisconsin honey production has fallen substantially due to low pollinator populations and unseasonable weather. In 2017 alone, Wisconsin honey producers saw a 23 percent decrease in honey production, costing hard-working Wisconsinites millions of dollars annually. Should pollinators continue to decline at an alarming rate, these losses in revenue will become even more severe.

To address this environmental and economic concern, numerous states across the country have taken important first steps in addressing declining pollinator health. The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) reports that at least 22 states have joined the effort to develop legislative measures that secure pollinator populations. For example, states have begun their restoration projects by implementing innovative habitat management practices and creating a committee to develop public education and awareness programs.

This bill creates a task force on native pollinator health consisting of 15 members, including two non-voting members from the Senate and two non-voting members from the Assembly. Both the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection will appoint a broad range of stakeholders, including farmers, a beekeeper, and a small business owner who relies on adequate pollinator health. This committee is charged with developing recommendations and reporting its findings to the Legislature, in order to share with us elected officials how we can best protect our pollinators moving forward.

By protecting these vital species, we have the ability to ensure our state's economic future and diversify Wisconsin ecosystems. Thank you to Representative Kulp and Senators Smith & Miller for your collaboration. I am proud to co-author this bipartisan legislation, and I thank you for your consideration.



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**Written Testimony of Megan Severson
State Director, Wisconsin Environment**

Senate Bill 617 “Creating a Task Force on Pollinator Health”

Committee on Natural Resources & Energy

Wisconsin State Senate

January 30, 2020

Members of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB617, to create a task force on native pollinator health. I am sharing this testimony today on behalf of Wisconsin Environment and our thousands of members statewide. We are a member-funded, non-partisan advocacy organization operating at both the state and national level, and we work to protect the places we love and champion the environmental values we all share.

Thank you for considering the important issue of pollinator health. I would like to use this opportunity to share some of the research behind the problems facing pollinators, and why we think a task force would be a great step towards protecting honeybees and other pollinators in Wisconsin.

You have likely heard that millions of bees are dying. The problem isn't going away, and there are real consequences for our natural world, as well as for our food supply if we don't fix this. A U.N. report found that 90 percent of wild plants and 75 percent of all food crops need animal pollinators to some extent.¹ Of those, bees are nature's best.² So whether it's seeing a hillside filled with blooming wildflowers or eating apples, squash and blueberries, we need bees.

¹ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, “Pollinators vital to our food supply under threat,” 2/16/2016, accessed on 12/2/2019 at <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/384726/icode/>.

² Michigan State University, Department of Entomology, Native Plants and Ecosystem Services, *Pollination*, accessed on 1/15/2020 at <https://www.canr.msu.edu/nativeplants/pollination/>.

In recent years, beekeepers in the U.S. report losing an average of 30 percent of all honeybee colonies each winter -- roughly twice the loss considered sustainable.³ Wisconsin has had some of the highest die-off rates, as much as 60 percent.⁴

Scientists point to several causes for bee die-offs, including bee-killing pesticides, the loss of good habitat, disease, and our changing climate. While it will be important to address each of these problems, the most immediate steps we can take to save the bees are to improve and enhance their habitats, and reduce bees' exposure to the class of pesticides that kill them.

A task force dedicated to pollinator health would help to identify which of these problems we could address quickly in Wisconsin, as well as set the stage for additional actions down the road.

Last summer, Wisconsin Environment canvassers spoke with over 20,000 Wisconsinites in one-on-one conversations about protecting bees and other pollinators. We were surprised to meet many people who either keep bees, or who know someone who keeps bees. We heard stories of folks who have had to stop keeping bees due to colony die-offs. We also met people who are passionate about the issue and are taking steps now to do something about the problem. For example, the Madison Mallards held a pollinator awareness day, there are pollinator garden education programs for kids, and individuals, businesses and local governments across Wisconsin are reducing or eliminating the use of certain bee-killing pesticides.

There are many ways Wisconsin can act to protect pollinator health, and we look forward to sharing our recommendations, as well as helping more Wisconsinites share their experiences, concerns and ideas. We urge you to support SB617, to create a task force on native pollinator health.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today.

³ University of Maryland, Bee Informed Partnership, *2018-2019 Honey Bee Colony Losses in the United States*, accessed on 1/15/2020 at https://beeinformed.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/2018_2019-Abstract.pdf.

⁴ Marion Ceraso, "Critics: State's plan to save bees provides little protection from pesticides," Wisconsin Watch, 2/21/2016, accessed on 5/7/2019 at <https://www.wisconsinwatch.org/2016/02/critics-states-plan-to-save-bees-provides-little-protection-from-pesticides/>.



Butterfly House

Butterflies • Prairie Plants • Gift Store
Beehive • Frogs, Toads & Turtles



Viewing Bridge & Maze

A 2 acre butterfly prairie • Monarch Maze •
4000' Walking Trail



Event Center

Public Rental Space • Family & Business
Meetings • Covered Patio With
Hummingbird viewing area

NATIVE BUTTERFLIES



Monarch



Mourning Cloak



Painted Lady



Cabbage White



Tiger Swallowtail



Red Admiral



Wood Nymph



Spangled Fritillary



Yellow Clouded Sulfur



Viceroy



Eastern Tailed Blue



Giant Swallowtail



Black Swallowtail



Hummingbird Moth



Baltimore Checkerspot



Buckeye

NECTAR PLANTS



Red Milkweed



Meadow Blazingstar



New England Aster



Stiff Goldenrod



Purple Coneflower



Butterfly Milkweed



Wild Bergamot



Sweet Black Eyed Susan

WELCOME TO...

Butterfly Gardens of Wisconsin

Our mission is to encourage everyone to plant a backyard butterfly garden. In order to attract butterflies, it is necessary to grow native nectar and host plants.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide a new nature center for everyone, especially our youth.

We hope you will experience the joy, excitement, awe, mystery and wonder of our native butterflies.

We would like to thank you...., the visitor, our volunteers and local sponsorships.

Jack & Marty Voight, owners

Contact us for open hours/dates
www.ButterflyGardensOfWisconsin.com
Info@ButterflyGardensOfWisconsin.com
920-475-0777



Butterfly Chatter

Most adult butterflies live only 2-4 weeks. The exception is the adult Monarch which hatches in late fall and survives about 9 months. This 5th Monarch generation flies to Mexico, hibernates and flies again to Texas to reproduce new Monarchs. The Mourning Cloak hibernates over winter and reproduces the following spring. Other species survive the winter as eggs, caterpillars or pupae(chrysalis) and hatch the following spring.

The life cycle of a butterfly consists of four different stages: egg, caterpillar, pupa(chrysalis) and adult.

Every female butterfly species has a specific host plant where she lays her eggs. Monarchs love milkweed, Swallowtails like dill, Red Admiral enjoy burning nettle, Wood Nymph prefer grasses.... See website for a more complete listing.

Butterflies are attracted mostly to nectar prairie plants. Many hybrid plants and other back yard flowers have no nectar, thus no butterfly visitors. See our website for a more complete listing of nectar plants.

Please view and do not handle butterflies. The scales on the wings are needed to fly and receive warmth from the sun.

N2550 State Highway 47, Appleton, WI
Take Exit 142 from US 41 & Go North 2 Miles



ButterflyGardensOfWisconsin.com

Butterfly Gardens of Wisconsin

WISCONSIN'S
LARGEST
BUTTERFLY
HOUSE & MAZE



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Testimony for SB 617
Native Pollinator Health Task Force
January 30, 2020

I would like to thank the co-authors of SB 617 to create a State of Wisconsin Native Pollinator Health Task Force. I appreciate the opportunity to testify before the Wisconsin State Senators of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy today of why we need to support a healthy environment for our native pollinators.

I have been a conservative conservationist my entire life. I was raised on a family dairy farm during the 1940's and 1950's. We grew oats, corn and hay for our cattle and killed weeds by hand. We did not use pesticides or herbicides. We had fence rows and paths where the weeds would grow. When I say "weeds", most of these plants were actually good pollinator plants that helped pollinators pollinate our crops and vegetables. In order to have plenty of pollinators (such as bees, butterflies, birds), they need native pollinator plants to live and reproduce. These pollinators help produce 35% of the food we eat.

In the last fifty years, pollinators and pollinator plants have been nearly eliminated due to zero farm lot lines, no grassy/weed paths and the use of herbicide.

I was one of the first master gardeners of Outagamie County and helped rural and urban gardeners to grow healthy food. Many of our pollinators are an endangered species. Eight years ago, I founded and co-own with my wife, Butterfly Gardens of Wisconsin. Our butterfly nature center is the largest butterfly garden and maze in Wisconsin. We have over 5,000 visitors each year viewing and learning about pollinators and pollinator plants at our 7 acre nature center. Our future plan is to expand specific pollinator areas for bees, bats, hummingbirds and butterflies to educate the public on the importance of pollinator conservation.

**Jack Voight
Organic Master Gardener
Founder & Co-owner of Butterfly Gardens of Wisconsin
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