



LEAD for Pollinators, Inc.

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Ohio House Civil Justice Committee

May 14, 2020

Proponent Testimony- HB496 Apiary Owners Immunity

Dear Chair Hambley, Vice Chair Patton, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the House Civil Justice Committee,

In years past, beekeeping was mainly a rural activity. However, today's over 5,800 registered Ohio beekeepers typically live in urban and suburban neighborhoods. Since bees fly up to 3 miles to forage (pollinate), these beekeepers provide free pollination services to their surrounding community – providing food and beauty through the pollination of trees, shrubs, flowers, and crops for all Ohioans. In this time of food shortages and food deserts, neighborhood apiaries will help ensure food security for those with backyard food gardens and fruit trees.

Because apiaries are now located in more densely populated areas, there is an increased probability of human- honey bee interaction, and any sting, near or far, will be laid at the beekeeper's door, therefore the possibility of a lawsuit increasingly looms large. Stinging is a honey bee's last resort of protection – once she stings a person, she dies.

As I mentioned earlier, honey bees travel up to 3 miles, and with 5,800 registered beekeepers in our state, finding the hive from which the stinging bee came from, is almost impossible. The short lifespan of honey bees, the diversity of genetics within a hive, and the number of feral colonies of honey bees all add to the difficulty of proving which bee came from which hive. To add even more uncertainty, many stings attributed to honey bees, may actually come from one of the 4,000 native pollinators including wasps and yellow jackets, as well as a myriad of other stinging insects. However, lawsuits have been brought against beekeepers. There is no winner in these legal actions. The beekeeper loses money and sleep, the public's perception of the beekeeping community is damaged, the person bringing the suit has yet to win, and burden is added to the court's already crammed dockets.

In 2016 alone, Ohio beekeepers contributed to Ohio's economy by providing over \$4 million worth of honey. Like all farm stock, honey bees are impacted by weather, drought, loss of

forage, chemical exposure, and an increasing number of pests and pathogens. Each year brings its own issues to the beekeeping community, like any other agricultural stakeholder.

HB 496 will not only encourage the adherence to local and state ordinances and best management beekeeping practices, but also provide security to the beekeeping community, 4-H students, community gardens, botanical gardens, and other destination locations that are improved by having an on-site apiary to ensure pollination for humans and wildlife alike, along with providing food supply security for the residents of Ohio.

Representative	County	# Beekeepers in County
Rep Hambley	Medina	174
Rep Patton	Cuyahoga	270
Rep Brown	Franklin	281
Rep Blair	Trumbull	77
Rep Butler	Montgomery	143
Rep Callender	Lake	73
Rep Crossman	Cuyahoga	270
Rep Cupp	Allen	33
Rep Galonski	Summit	229
Rep Hicks-Hudson	Lucas	114
Rep Hillyer	Holmes/Tuscarawas	85/47
Rep Merrin	Fulton/Lucas	42/114
Rep Seitz	Hamilton	142
Rep Skindell	Cuyahoga	270
Rep Swearingen	Erie/Ottawa	41/34

Testimony formally submitted by:

Terry Lieberman- Smith,

Co-Founder, LEAD for Pollinators, Inc.

Communications Officer, Greene County Beekeepers Association

Apiarist, Smith Farm Pure Honey

WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the Witness Information Form before testifying:

Date: May 20, 2020

Name: Terry Lieberman-Smith

Are you representing: Yourself _____ Organization

Organization (If Applicable): LEAD for Pollinators, Inc.

Position/Title: Coordinator

Address: P.O. Box 24181

City: Dayton State: OH Zip: 45424

Best Contact Telephone: 937.272.6549 Email: coordinator@leadforpollinators.org

Do you wish to be added to the committee notice email distribution list? Yes _____ No

Business before the committee

Legislation (Bill/Resolution Number): HB 496

Specific Issue: Apiary Owners Immunity

Are you testifying as a: Proponent Opponent _____ Interested Party _____

Will you have a written statement, visual aids, or other material to distribute? Yes No _____

(If yes, please send an electronic version of the documents, if possible, to the Chair's office prior to committee. You may also submit hard copies to the Chair's staff prior to committee.)

How much time will your testimony require? 5 minutes

Please provide a brief statement on your position:

I am a proponent for this bill to help protect beekeepers from frivolous lawsuits.

Please be advised that this form and any materials (written or otherwise) submitted or presented to this committee are records that may be requested by the public and may be published online.