

Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Carolyn Watkins
Franklin County Pollinator Pathway
Proponent Testimony on House Bill 364
November 19, 2024

Chair Schaffer, Vice Chair Landis, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson and members of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, I thank you for this opportunity to submit proponent testimony for House Bill 364 on behalf of Franklin County Pollinator Pathway.

I am Carolyn Watkins, recently retired from the State of Ohio, and happy to now have time to volunteer with the Pollinator Pathway. I have joined many of my neighbors in replacing the non-native grass in the curb lawn in front of our home with Ohio native plants using a kit of pollinator plant plugs I ordered from the Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District.

Pollinator Pathway is a network of individuals, garden clubs, native plant societies, nature centers, watershed groups, some private companies, and government agencies like Soil and Water Conservation Districts and OSU Extension county offices. We are working to create corridors of native plants on public and private lands, to provide nutrition and habitat for bees, butterflies, hummingbirds and other pollinating insects and wildlife. Pollinator populations are in sharp decline because of pesticide use and loss of habitat. We can no longer support sustainable populations in our isolated parks and preserves alone. Many native bees have a range of less than one quarter mile, so the goal is to encourage native plantings and connect way-station properties that are no farther apart than that.

H.B. 364 encourages non-commercial seed sharing to support conservation of pollinators and the creation of native plant habitats. It removes milkweed, ironweed and other Ohio native plants from the list of noxious plants that operators of toll roads, railroads and electric railways are required to cut and control in their right-of-way. Leaving them in place on these properties can help migrating monarch butterflies and other pollinators. We are asking the cities and townships where we live to make similar changes to their local ordinances. We thank the sponsors, Representative Dobos and Representative Klopfenstein, for introducing this legislation.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of H.B. 364.. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.