



## Ohio State Beekeepers Association

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May 15, 2018

### **Proponent Testimony- HB392 Apiary Owners Immunity**

Chairperson, Senator Bob Hackett, Vice Chairperson, Senator Frank Hoagland, Ranking Minority Member Senator Sean O'Brien, and Senators Bill Beagle, Stephanie Kunze, Frank LaRose, Rob McColley, Bob Peterson, Michael Skindell, Charleta Tavares, and Joe Uecker the members of the Senate Agricultural Committee have a constituent connection to this bill as the entire committees' constituents have a total of *3,787 registered beekeepers from your respective districts.*

In years past, beekeeping was mainly a rural activity. However, today's over 8,000 Ohio beekeepers 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.

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 8,000 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, the numbers 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 392 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.

Sen McColley	Auglaize, Defiance, Fulton, Hancock, Hardin, Henry, Logan, Paulding, Putnam, VanWert, Williams	316
Sen Beagle	Darke, Miami, Montgomery, Preble	348
Sen Hackett	Clarke, Greene, Madison	250
Sen Hoagland	Athens, Belmont, Carroll, Harrison, Jefferson, Meigs, Monroe, Noble, Vinton, Washington	535
Sen Kunze	Franklin	386
Sen LaRose	Summit, Stark, Wayne	582
Sen O'Brien	Ashtabula, Geauga, Trumbull	223
Sen Peterson	Clinton, Fayette, Galia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence, Pickaway, Pike, Ross, Vinton	390
Sen Skindell	Cuyahoga	334
Sen Tavares	Franklin	386
Sen Uecker	Adams, Brown, Clermont, Lawrence, Scioto	337

*Testimony formally submitted by:*

*Terry Lieberman-Smith, President of The Ohio State Beekeepers Association, Inc.*