



February 18, 2020

State of Kansas House of Representatives
Committee on Agriculture
State Capitol
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Re: Written Testimony of the Natural Resources Defense Council in Support of the
Kansas Solar Pollinator Habitat Act (HB 2623)

Dear Committee Members:

On behalf of the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) and our over 17,000 Kansas members and online activists, we submit this testimony in strong support of HB 2623, the Kansas Solar Pollinator Habitat Act. The act benefits farmers, solar operators, and bees by allowing solar operators to advertise their sites as “pollinator friendly” if they meet voluntary criteria outlined in a state pollinator “scorecard.”

Bees, birds, and other pollinators are a critical part of Kansas’s agricultural economy. Top crops like canola depend on bees, while other staple crops, such as cotton, can benefit from bee pollination in the form of higher yields. In addition to traditional managed honey bees, Kansas is also home to hundreds of species of native pollinators—many of which are beneficial to crop production and essential to the state’s breathtaking wildflowers and other plant and animal life.

In recent years, however, bees and other pollinators have been dying at an alarming rate—with over 55% of the state’s honey bees dying in the last year alone.¹ Although pollinators face a host of challenges, a leading problem is the lack of high-quality habitat providing the food and shelter they need to survive.

The Kansas Solar Pollinator Habitat Act helps bees and other pollinators by providing a voluntary incentive to solar operators to convert unused land into high quality habitat. Operators whose sites adhere to guidance published by Kansas University’s Biological Survey would be allowed to advertise those sites as benefiting pollinators. This guidance would take the form of a “scorecard,” with points assigned for both the quality and quantity of habitat planted, emphasizing the planting of native Kansas species. Sites meeting the required number of points may be advertised as “pollinator friendly,” provided the operator makes the completed scorecard and accompanying vegetation management plan available to the state Biological Survey, any state nonprofit solar industry trade associations, and the public.

¹ See Bee Informed Partnership, *Colony Loss Map* (accessed Feb. 13, 2020), <https://bit.ly/2HpheoW>, and select “Annual” under the “Season” menu.

Several other states have passed pollinator-friendly solar site legislation, often with strong bipartisan or even unanimous support. These include: Illinois ([525 ILCS 55/1 et seq.](#)); Maryland ([Md. Code, Nat. Res. § 3-303.1](#)); Minnesota ([MN Stat. § 216B.1642](#)); Missouri ([Mo. Stat. § 261.500](#)); South Carolina ([S.C. Code § 50-4-30](#)); and Vermont ([6 V.S. § 5102](#)).²

By encouraging operators to provide new homes for bees and other pollinators at solar sites in rural areas across the state, the Kansas Solar Pollinator Habitat Act represents a win-win for farmers, solar operators, beekeepers, and, of course, bees. NRDC strongly supports this bill.

Respectfully,



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² State scorecards are available online for: Illinois (<https://bit.ly/2PR02f8>); Maryland (<https://bit.ly/39uSYvl>); Michigan (<https://bit.ly/2OTGG7M>); Minnesota (<https://bit.ly/2CehJNF> [for project planning] and <https://bit.ly/2pIcMtO> [for established projects]); and Vermont (<https://bit.ly/2wewQUv>).

