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## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

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COMMITTEES:  
AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION AND FORESTRY  
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Leonard Jordan, Chief (Acting)  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue SW, Room 5105A  
Washington, DC 20250  
Dear Chief Jordan:

I write to express my support for the creation of a honey bee and pollinator habitat enhancement that can be tailored for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). Creating this enhancement for the 2018 crop year and beyond would encourage the introduction and continuation of canola and/or sunflowers in cropping rotations and help provide critical habitat and forage for honey bees and wild pollinators. I would also request that the Natural Resources Conservation Service provide me with a report on its ongoing efforts to address pollinator health concerns.

North Dakota is the top honey producing state in the nation and is home to nearly 500,000 honey producing colonies, which yielded over 37.8 million pounds of honey in 2016, which was valued at \$65.4 million. In addition to producing honey, almost all of the honey bees in North Dakota winter in warmer climates where they pollinate over 90 crops which, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, account for 15-30 percent of the food we eat. However, pollinators face numerous challenges, including: Colony Collapse Disorder, various pests and diseases, and declining quality forage. The lack of suitable habitat and forage has been identified by the Pollinator Health Task Force as a major factor in the decline of both honey bee and wild pollinator health.

The honey bee and pollinator habitat enhancement would allow participating producers to plant either canola or sunflowers as a whole farm enhancement or for tracts of land on a farm. For acres enrolled as a whole farm, 50 percent of the cropland would need to be covered over the five year contract, with a minimum five percent planted as a covered flowering crop each year. For smaller tracts of land, 100 percent of the planted acreage enrolled in a five year period would be covered, with a minimum coverage of 10 percent. Increasing the planted acres for canola and sunflowers would have an immediate and positive impact on both honey bee and wild pollinator health.

If you have any questions regarding this proposal, feel free to reach out to my staff: Jake Westlin at (202) 224-9915 or [jake\\_westlin@heitkamp.senate.gov](mailto:jake_westlin@heitkamp.senate.gov); or Jared Henderson at (202) 224-8819 or [jared\\_henderson@heitkamp.senate.gov](mailto:jared_henderson@heitkamp.senate.gov). I would also greatly appreciate if you kept my office informed about the status of this request.

Sincerely,



Heidi Heitkamp

United State Senate

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