



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY  
OF THE UNITED STATES**

**January 31, 2024**

**Finance Committee**

**SB 178**

***Agriculture – Pollinator Habitat Plan – Requirements for State Highway Administration***

**FAVORABLE**

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), on behalf of our Maryland supporters, strongly supports Senate Bill 178, which would set certain requirements for the State Highway Administration regarding the creation and implementation of pollinator and wildlife-friendly vegetation management areas along state highways.

People, neighborhoods, and entities across the state are choosing to replace conventional turf grass with native plants that better support pollinators and wildlife. Creating more sustainable strips of habitat benefits not just the animals, but also leads to a healthier environment, as these spaces support a robust ecosystem without the need for widespread application of chemical fertilizers and pesticides nor the intensive use of gas-powered landscaping tools to manage them. Creating more sustainable strips of habitat benefits not just animals, but also leads to a healthier environment, as these spaces support a robust ecosystem without the need for widespread application of chemical fertilizers and pesticides nor the intensive use of gas-powered landscaping tools to manage them.

The legislature has recognized the critical value of pollinator and wildlife-friendly habitat management by protecting an individual's rights to create natural spaces in their own yards within communities. This bill simply extends that valuable concept by requiring the implementation of pollinator friendly vegetation along state highways – a significant amount of land given the acreage that SHA manages along our roadsides. Because highways stretch across entire regions of the state as well as crisscross different habitats and ecosystems, managing these areas to increase native plant habitat not only increases support for pollinators but will enhance the health of our state lands and reduce the damage to ecosystems including pollinators across the state.

We thank the committee for its consideration of this legislation and request a favorable vote on SB178.