



Pennsylvania State Beekeepers Association

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The Honorable Edward G. Rendell
Governor, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
225 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120

Via Fax: 717-772-8284

RE: 2010 Honeybee Apiary Inspection Program Funding

Sir:

The Pennsylvania State Beekeepers Association (PSBA) requests that the budget reinstate money to continue the Honeybee Apiary Inspection Program for 2010 and that the Department of Agriculture have the flexibility to hire seasonal inspectors.

In the past, the Apiary Inspection Program consisted of ten seasonally-employed inspectors from May – September. The cost of the program was \$200,000 for wages, vehicles, and expenses. In 2009, all hiring of seasonal and part-time employees was frozen. With the use of some federal funds, the Department of Agriculture was able to continue a scaled-down inspection program consisting of seven inspectors canvassing only the areas of the Commonwealth with a recent history of contagious diseases. However, those federal funds will not be available for 2010.

The primary focus of the Apiary Inspection Program is to reduce American Foulbrood (AFB), an extremely contagious disease that can survive in infected equipment for decades. Once a colony is diagnosed with AFB, the bees are usually killed and the equipment burned. A vigorous inspection program over the past five years has reduced the number of AFB cases from 3% to 1.5%.

In addition to AFB, beekeepers are affected by many threats including Colony Collapse Disease (CCD), fungal pathogens, parasites, and the possible introduction of Africanized bees. A strong well-funded inspection service is needed to monitor threats, develop treatment recommendations, and disseminate timely bee information.

The plight of the honey bees has been well published in the press and has generated many new beekeepers. In Montgomery County alone, there are over 250 new beekeepers this year. Montgomery County is also an area with one of the highest number

of reported AFB cases. The combination of new beekeepers—not knowledgeable in bee diseases—in an area with AFB can be a disaster without an inspection program.

Why should we be concerned about the health of the honey bee population? The value of pollination services of honey bees in Pennsylvania is estimated to be \$76.3 million. Beekeepers in the state manage over 35,000 hives and produce 1.3 million pounds of honey.

We understand the budget crisis and the need for every program to look for ways to cut costs. In that spirit, we would support a second year with a scaled-down program of 7-8 inspectors, with inspection priorities set by the Department of Agriculture to try to contain these contagious diseases.

In addition, PSBA requests that the Department of Agriculture be granted the flexibility to hire seasonal employees for the Apiary Inspection program in 2010.

Very truly yours,

President Pennsylvania State Beekeepers Association

cc.

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