

116TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# S. 2918

To amend title 23, United States Code, to require the Secretary of Transportation to establish a program to provide grants to carry out activities to benefit pollinators on roadsides and highway rights-of-way, including the planting and seeding of native, locally-appropriate grasses and wildflowers, including milkweed, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

NOVEMBER 20, 2019

Mr. MERKLEY (for himself, Mr. ALEXANDER, Mr. CARPER, and Mr. ROUNDS) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Environment and Public Works

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## A BILL

To amend title 23, United States Code, to require the Secretary of Transportation to establish a program to provide grants to carry out activities to benefit pollinators on roadsides and highway rights-of-way, including the planting and seeding of native, locally-appropriate grasses and wildflowers, including milkweed, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Monarch and Polli-  
3 nator Highway Act of 2019” or the “MPH Act of 2019”.

4 **SEC. 2. POLLINATOR-FRIENDLY PRACTICES ON ROADSIDES**  
5 **AND HIGHWAY RIGHTS-OF-WAY.**

6 (a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 3 of title 23, United  
7 States Code, is amended by adding at the end the fol-  
8 lowing:

9 **“§ 331. Pollinator-friendly practices on roadsides and**  
10 **highway rights-of-way**

11 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall establish a  
12 program to provide grants to eligible entities to carry out  
13 activities to benefit pollinators on roadsides and highway  
14 rights-of-way, including the planting and seeding of na-  
15 tive, locally-appropriate grasses and wildflowers, including  
16 milkweed.

17 “(b) ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—An entity eligible to re-  
18 ceive a grant under this section is—

19 “(1) a State department of transportation;

20 “(2) an Indian tribe; or

21 “(3) a Federal land management agency.

22 “(c) APPLICATION.—To be eligible to receive a grant  
23 under this section, an eligible entity shall submit to the  
24 Secretary an application at such time, in such manner,  
25 and containing such information as the Secretary may re-

1 quire, including a pollinator-friendly practices plan de-  
 2 scribed in subsection (d).

3 “(d) POLLINATOR-FRIENDLY PRACTICES PLAN.—

4 “(1) IN GENERAL.—An eligible entity shall in-  
 5 clude in the application under subsection (c) a plan  
 6 that describes the pollinator-friendly practices that  
 7 the eligible entity has implemented or plans to im-  
 8 plement, including—

9 “(A) practices relating to mowing strate-  
 10 gies that promote early successional vegetation  
 11 and limit disturbance during periods of highest  
 12 use by target pollinator species on roadsides  
 13 and highway rights-of-way, such as—

14 “(i) reducing the mowing swath out-  
 15 side of the State-designated safety zone;

16 “(ii) increasing the mowing height;

17 “(iii) reducing the mowing frequency;

18 “(iv) refraining from mowing monarch  
 19 and other pollinator habitat during periods  
 20 in which monarchs or other pollinators are  
 21 present;

22 “(v) use of a flushing bar and cutting  
 23 at reduced speeds to reduce pollinator  
 24 deaths due to mowing; or

1 “(vi) reducing raking along roadsides  
2 and highway rights-of-way;

3 “(B) implementation of an integrated vege-  
4 tation management plan that includes ap-  
5 proaches such as mechanical tree and brush re-  
6 moval, targeted and judicious use of herbicides,  
7 and mowing, to address weed issues on road-  
8 sides and highway rights-of-way;

9 “(C) planting or seeding of native, locally-  
10 appropriate grasses and wildflowers, including  
11 milkweed, on roadsides and highway rights-of-  
12 way to enhance pollinator habitat, including lar-  
13 val host plants;

14 “(D) removing nonnative grasses from  
15 planting and seeding mixes, except for use as  
16 nurse or cover crops; or

17 “(E) any other pollinator-friendly practices  
18 the Secretary determines to be appropriate.

19 “(2) COORDINATION.—In developing a plan  
20 under paragraph (1), an eligible entity that is a  
21 State department of transportation or a Federal  
22 land management agency shall coordinate with appli-  
23 cable State agencies, including State agencies with  
24 jurisdiction over agriculture and fish and wildlife.

1           “(3) CONSULTATION.—In developing a plan  
2 under paragraph (1)—

3           “(A) an eligible entity that is a State de-  
4 partment of transportation or a Federal land  
5 management agency shall consult with affected  
6 or interested Indian tribes; and

7           “(B) any eligible entity may consult with  
8 nonprofit organizations, institutions of higher  
9 education, metropolitan planning organizations,  
10 and any other relevant entities.

11       “(e) AWARD OF GRANTS.—

12           “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall provide  
13 a grant to each eligible entity that submits an appli-  
14 cation under subsection (c), including a plan under  
15 subsection (d), that the Secretary determines to be  
16 satisfactory.

17           “(2) AMOUNT OF GRANTS.—The amount of a  
18 grant under this section—

19           “(A) shall be based on the number of polli-  
20 nator-friendly practices the eligible entity has  
21 implemented or plans to implement; and

22           “(B) shall not exceed \$150,000.

23       “(f) USE OF FUNDS.—An eligible entity that receives  
24 a grant under this section shall use the funds for the im-

1 plementation, improvement, or further development of the  
 2 plan under subsection (d).

3 “(g) FEDERAL SHARE.—The Federal share of the  
 4 cost of an activity carried out with a grant under this sec-  
 5 tion shall be 100 percent.

6 “(h) BEST PRACTICES.—The Secretary shall develop  
 7 and make available to eligible entities best practices for,  
 8 and a priority ranking of, pollinator-friendly practices on  
 9 roadsides and highway rights-of-way.

10 “(i) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—On request of an eli-  
 11 gible entity that receives a grant under this section, the  
 12 Secretary shall provide technical assistance with the imple-  
 13 mentation, improvement, or further development of a plan  
 14 under subsection (d).

15 “(j) ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS.—For each fiscal year,  
 16 the Secretary may use not more than 2 percent of the  
 17 amounts made available to carry out this section for the  
 18 administrative costs of carrying out this section.

19 “(k) REPORT.—Not later than 1 year after the date  
 20 on which the first grant is provided under this section,  
 21 the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Environ-  
 22 ment and Public Works of the Senate and the Committee  
 23 on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of  
 24 Representatives a report on the implementation of the pro-  
 25 gram under this section.

1 “(l) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

2 “(1) IN GENERAL.—There is authorized to be  
3 appropriated to carry out this section \$5,000,000 for  
4 each of fiscal years 2020 through 2026.

5 “(2) AVAILABILITY.—Amounts made available  
6 under this section shall remain available for a period  
7 of 3 years after the last day of the fiscal year for  
8 which the funds are authorized.”.

9 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The analysis for chap-  
10 ter 3 of title 23, United States Code, is amended by add-  
11 ing at the end the following:

“331. Pollinator-friendly practices on roadsides and highway rights-of-way.”.

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