Date: February 10, 2016

TO: House of Delegates, Environment and Transportation Committee

Re: HB 211 – Pollinator Protection Act

Position: Strongly Support

Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility respectfully requests a positive report on HB 211, the Pollinator Protection Act.

HB 211 would restrict consumer use of neonicotinoid pesticides (“neonics”) to ensure they would be available for sale only to certified applicators, farmers or veterinarians. It would also require that any plants, seeds or nursery stock treated with neonics include an informational label or signage in close proximity.

The use of neonics has an indirect and direct effect on human health. There is ample scientific evidence that neonics are a great threat to pollinators and are responsible for the collapse of honeybee colonies. The collapse of our honeybee populations directly threatens our food supply, and would result in high food costs for consumers. In Maryland, many crops are being affected, from apples, melons, and berries to tomatoes and carrots.

In addition to threatening our food supply, research suggests that certain neonics may affect neuronal development and function, such as those associated with learning and memory, in humans and other mammals.¹

The use of neonics is particularly dangerous because they are absorbed into all parts of the plant, from leaves and stems to seeds, pollen and nectar. They are persistent and highly water soluble, so they will contaminate water sources and remain in aquatic environments for long periods of time.

Because neonics affect so many species, they disrupt important ecosystem processes, such as decomposition and nutrient cycling. In addition, there is

¹ Scientific Opinion on the developmental neurotoxicity potential of acetamiprid and imidacloprid, EFSA
evidence that the application of neonics reduces the diversity of communities in the soil, insect communities and aquatic communities.

These finding strongly suggest we should attempt to minimize the use of neonics in Maryland while more research is carried out.