H.R. 113TH CONGRESS 2D SESSION

To amend title 23, United States Code, to encourage and facilitate efforts by States and other transportation rights-of-way managers to adopt integrated vegetation management practices, including enhancing plantings of native forbs and grasses that provide habitats and forage for Monarch butterflies and other native pollinators and honey bees, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. Hastings of Florida introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on ______

A BILL

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

This Act may be cited as the “Highways Bettering the Economy and Environment Pollinator Protection Act”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) The roadside vegetation management practices of both State governments and the Federal Government aim to secure motorist safety, reduce the presence of noxious weeds, and stabilize the soil.

(2) Federal and State highway departments are facing severe budget shortfalls.

(3) Native forbs and grasses are less likely to encroach onto roads than invasive species, such as kudzu.

(4) Integrated vegetation management practices will reduce the cost of maintaining roadside vegetation.

(5) Native forbs and grasses are best adapted to local conditions and thus require less active management, reducing the need to replant, weed, and mow the areas adjacent to the road.

(6) Pollinators, such as native bees, honey bees, birds, bats, Monarch butterflies, and other butterflies, are suffering drastic population loss due in part to loss of habitat and forage.
(7) Pollinators are vital for American agriculture. Responsible for 1 out of every 3 bites of food we eat, a diverse pollinator population is necessary for maintaining the diversity of our plant life and food supply.

(8) Studies have shown supporting native forbs and grasses along the roadside can be beneficial to the pollinator population by providing migratory corridors and habitat and forage connectivity and by helping such populations adapt to climate change.

(9) Plantings of noninvasive, locally appropriate milkweed species can create migratory way stations for the endangered Monarch butterfly and to facilitate migrations of other pollinators.

(10) Enhancing pollinator populations on rights-of-way can result in improved pollination services for neighboring lands, including agriculture and wildlife ecosystems.

(11) Highway rights-of-way managed by States represent 17 million acres of pollinator habitat conservation opportunity, and similar opportunities and benefits exist on other transportation rights-of-way.
SEC. 3. ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISIONS TO ENCOURAGE POLLINATOR HABITAT AND FORAGE ON TRANSPORTATION RIGHTS-OF-WAY.

(a) In General.—Section 319 of title 23, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in subsection (a) by striking “beauty adjacent” and inserting “beauty (including the enhancement of habitat and forage for pollinators) adjacent”; and

(2) by adding at the end the following:

“(c) ENCOURAGEMENT OF POLLINATOR HABITAT AND FORAGE DEVELOPMENT AND PROTECTION ON TRANSPORTATION RIGHTS-OF-WAY.—In carrying out any program administered by the Secretary, the Secretary shall, in conjunction with willing States, as appropriate—

“(1) conduct or encourage integrated vegetation management practices on roadsides and other transportation rights-of-way, including reduced mowing;

“(2) enhance the development of habitat and forage for Monarch butterflies, other native pollinators, and honey bees through plantings of native forbs and grasses, including noninvasive, native milkweed species that can serve as migratory way stations for the endangered Monarch butterfly and to facilitate migrations of other pollinators.
“(3) encourage leveraging through partnerships and coordination with stakeholders in support of pollinators and plantings of native forbs and grasses, such as environmental groups, research institutions, other agencies, businesses, and community organizations; and

“(4) conduct or facilitate research and demonstration projects on the economic and environmental benefits and best practices for integrated vegetation management, reduced mowing, and plantings of native forbs and grasses for pollinator habitat, forage, and migratory way stations for Monarch butterflies and other migrating pollinators.”.

(b) REPORT.—Not later than 18 months after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Transportation shall transmit to Congress a report that includes—

(1) an analysis of current programs and authorities available to carry out section 319(c) of title 23, United States Code;

(2) a summary of programs and authorities being used to implement such section;

(3) an assessment of actions being taken by willing State transportation departments and other managers of transportation rights-of-way to implement integrated vegetation management practices,
reduce mowing, and enhance habitat and forage for
Monarch butterflies, other native pollinators, and
honey bees through plantings of native forbs and
grasses and migratory way stations for Monarch
butterflies and other migrating pollinators; and

(4) any recommendations for further action.

SEC. 4. PROVISION OF HABITAT, FORAGE, AND MIGRATORY
WAY STATIONS FOR MONARCH BUTTERFLIES,
OTHER NATIVE POLLINATORS, AND HONEY
BEES.

Section 329(a)(1) of title 23, United States Code, is
amended by inserting “provision of habitat, forage, and
migratory way stations for Monarch butterflies, other na-
tive pollinators, and honey bees,” before “and aesthetic
enhancement”.