

Illinois State Government Administration Committee
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Proponent Testimony for HB 4476
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Chairwoman Kifowit, Vice-Chairman Slaughter, Spokesperson Halbrook, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to be here today on behalf of Audubon Great Lakes to support HB 4476, which would incorporate bird-friendly design into the construction and renovation of state-owned buildings in Illinois.

Audubon's mission is to protect birds and the places they need, today and tomorrow. Audubon represents 1.7 million members and more than 450 chapters across the country. My name is Kristin Murphy, and I'm the Government Affairs Associate for Audubon Great Lakes, a regional office of the National Audubon Society located in Chicago. Here in Illinois, we have more than 52,000 members and eleven affiliated chapters across the state.

It's a particularly poignant moment to speak to the committee about the need for bird safe building policy. Two groundbreaking studies recently published paint the clearest picture yet of the urgent need for action to invest in the protection of birds.

First, a major new study found that since 1970, North America has lost nearly 3 billion birds. That's more than one out of every four birds that have vanished from the continent. In addition, this past fall Audubon scientists released a new report which found that two-thirds of North American birds are threatened by climate change – that's 389 species at risk.

As these declines accelerate, we lose out on the tremendous value that birds themselves provide to our communities. They are pollinators, seed dispensers, and mosquito eaters. There are 46 million people – nearly one in five adults – who watch birds in the United States. Birds not only provide joy to people through birdwatching or hunting, but also provide significant economic benefits, including the \$100 billion birdwatching industry and the 860,000 jobs it creates. According to the US Fish and Wildlife Service, there are more than 1,811,000 total birders in Illinois alone.

The fact is, we need birds and birds need our help.

The migration of birds is one of our state's great natural spectacles. Over 250 different species migrate through Chicago alone, about five million individual birds in all. Too often, however, these incredible journeys, which can cover thousands of miles a year, are cut short due to collisions with the built environment. Volunteer monitors collected over 26,000 dead birds in the Chicago Loop between 2005 and 2014. One of those birds was a banded Black-and-white Warbler found dead from a building collision. This species is vulnerable to climate change impacts such as spring heat waves and heavier rainfall that endanger young birds in the nest. The individual bird that the monitors found hatched in Ontario, Canada in 2005. It traveled between its northern breeding grounds to the southern United States or Central America five times before its sixth migration brought it through Chicago where it died from a collision with a building well short of its 11 year life expectancy.

The common-sense measures provided by this bill could prevent the needless deaths of countless numbers of birds through the use of bird-friendly design and materials on state buildings. Each year, an estimated 300



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million to one billion birds are killed as a result of building collisions across the United States. Birds are often drawn in by bright building lights during migration, and are particularly susceptible to colliding with glass due to its reflectivity and transparency, which birds cannot recognize. Birds migrate through Illinois from as far as South America, facing numerous threats along the way to their nesting grounds across the United States and Canada, so it is vital that we take sensible action to reduce these avoidable threats.

We thank Representative Morgan for introducing this bird safe building policy because it will address this significant threat to birds by establishing guidelines for state buildings, with an exemption for certain historic buildings. The bill would only apply to new construction, acquired buildings, and substantial alterations for buildings under the management of the Central Management Services. It would address the most serious building hazard for birds by reducing the amount of glass on buildings or by using bird-friendly design features such as patterned or opaque glass, screens, or UV-reflective material. Simple patterns on glass have been shown to effectively reduce collisions, as it makes the glass visible to birds.

The bill also calls for limiting exterior lighting by shielding lights, and encourages automatic controls of lighting, in order to reduce the number of birds initially drawn in to the buildings. These principles do not need to take away from the aesthetics or functionality of our buildings, and in some cases can also provide an opportunity to improve building efficiency and reduce energy costs.

By passing this legislation and adopting bird-friendly design and materials on state buildings, not only would it save a significant numbers of bird's lives, but it also can inspire further action on non-state buildings, potentially leading to new and better standards across our state and nation. This would lead to a far brighter future for birds, and for all of those that enjoy them in our community and across our state. Where birds thrive people prosper.

Thank you for considering our position - we would look forward to working with you.