



Date: January 26, 2022

Bill: HB15 – Invasive and Native Plants – Classification, Listing, Use, and Sales and Use Tax

Position: Support

Dear Chair Atterbeary and Members of the Committee:

The National Wildlife Federation and its Maryland affiliate, the National Aquarium, respectfully request a favorable report for **HB 15 – Invasive and Native Plants – Classification, Listing, Use, and Sales and Use Tax**, which will increase the number of plants recognized as invasive species by the state and promote the use of native plant species within Maryland.

HB 15 expands the State’s current list of plants classified as either Tier 1 invasive plants or Tier 2 invasive plants to reflect the plants identified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s (USFWS) “Plant Invaders of Mid-Atlantic Natural Areas.” Of the 83 invasive species named in the book, only 12 currently appear on Maryland Department of Agriculture’s Tier 1 & 2 Invasive Plants list.

It is important to note that the USFWS list of invasive plants in the Mid-Atlantic is only a partial list of the most troublesome species. Experts have identified more than 600 plants that are invasive or at risk of becoming invasive in the Mid-Atlantic.¹ The state currently recognizes 19 plants as Tier 1 or Tier 2 invasive species. At a minimum, the state should adopt the USFWS list for invasive species in the Mid-Atlantic by adding them to the existing Tier 1 and Tier 2 plants.

This bill also requires state agencies and entities that receive state funding to prioritize the use of native plants for projects, whenever possible. This is an important component of continuing to promote native plant use and can also help increase the market for native plant growers in Maryland.

Native plant species have grown naturally in our region for thousands of years and are well adapted to our soil conditions and our climate. They help improve water quality because, unlike their nonnative counterparts, they do not rely on additional watering, fertilizers and pesticides to thrive. They also play an important role in supporting local wildlife and migratory species. Planting native species attracts local pollinators from caterpillars to birds and crucial bees, which help us all by pollinating everything from cultivated crops to wildflowers. When non-native plants with no natural controls to limit their spread are planted, native plants are often unable to compete for available sunlight, water and nutrients and disappear along with the support system for native wildlife.

¹ Mid-Atlantic Invaders Tool – invasive.org/MidAtlantic

Saving wildlife and habitats is one of the National Aquarium's three strategic conservation goals. The Aquarium plants native trees, gardens, and wetland grasses throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed to provide habitat for wildlife and promote coastal resiliency. Over the last 20 years, the National Aquarium has planted 2 million native plants throughout the watershed, including through partnership with the National Wildlife Federation's Garden for Wildlife program. This program educates and empowers people to use native plants to save wildlife and is the country's longest-running movement dedicated to helping local wildlife and wild spaces.

By passing HB 15, Maryland will be taking a meaningful step towards protecting our local ecosystem and wildlife. **We urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 15.**

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