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Testimony encouraging a **SUPPORT** of House Bill 950 – Maryland Native Plants Program

Environment and Transportation Committee
March 3, 2023

Dear Chairman Barve and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **SUPPORT OF HB950**, on behalf of Arundel Rivers Federation. Arundel Rivers is a non-profit organization dedicated to the protection, preservation, and restoration of the South, West and Rhode Rivers with over 3,500 supporters. Our mission is to work with local communities to achieve clean, fishable, and swimmable waterways for present and future generations.

House Bill 950 will create the Maryland Native Plants Program, promoting the use and sale of plants native to Maryland, and provide education and outreach to the public about the benefits of planting native. The program will utilize the expertise of the University of Maryland Extension Office, which already has the existing infrastructure and native-plant programming to successfully implement this program. Additionally, it will create a consumer friendly and voluntary labeling program and logo to identify a plant as a “Maryland Native” on plant tags and at point-of-sale. This will provide consumers with the choice to make more environmentally minded decisions while shopping.

We have seen significant declines in pollinators and other wildlife species, highlighting the need for more native plant species that are critical in the food web and necessary for the survival of pollinator species.¹ Native plant species also provide a benefit to our local water quality. Native plants often have more extensive root systems and require less fertilizer than non-native species, resulting in improved downstream and riparian water quality due to less nutrient loading. Arundel Rivers Federation encourages residents within our watersheds to plant native species through our Bay Loving Landscapes Program. This bill will directly support that program and hopefully result in more native plants being planted.

Arundel Rivers Federation strongly supports making native plant species more accessible to Marylanders to improve habitat and local water quality and we respectfully request a **FAVORABLE REPORT on HB950**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elle Bassett".

Elle Bassett
South, West and Rhode Riverkeeper
Arundel Rivers Federation

¹ Maryland Department of Natural Resources. “What’s the Buzz: All About Pollinators”
<https://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Pages/habitat/wawhatsthebuzz.aspx>

