

## HB950 Maryland Native Plant Program - FAVORABLE

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In support of: Maryland Native Plants Program

HB950 Committee: Environment and Transportation

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My name is Lauren Hubbard, I reside in Montgomery County, Maryland. I hold a doctorate in plant developmental genetics and am a certified Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professional. I'm also a volunteer weed warrior supervisor and master gardener. I own a landscape design/consulting business and operate a small native plant nursery. I am testifying in support of the Maryland Native Plants Program.

In working with the public both professionally and as a volunteer, I have found that knowledge about and access to native plants is a significant hurdle for many professional landscapers and home gardeners who are interested in ecological landscaping. While the availability of native plants for use in the landscaping business has been increasing, most nurseries continue to sell more non-native species than native. Making matters worse, they often sell invasives. Due to a lack of knowledge, many of my clients have often unwittingly purchased invasives and added them to their own yards! Via seeds and runners, these invasives blow or creep into our parks and wildspaces, adding to the ever growing invasive load that is disrupting these ecosystems. Clear labeling of plants, particularly those that are native to Maryland would help reduce these unhappy accidents and help save homeowners from frustrating and costly mistakes and also help protect our parks and wildspaces.

As the movement towards native landscaping increases, the landscaping industry needs more professionals knowledgeable in the use native plants and we need access to more locally sourced and grown native plants. The public needs more access to locally sourced and grown natives and research based information on native plants and ecological landscaping. Funding positions within Maryland Extension for native plant specialists would help support industry professionals and home gardeners who are seeking guidance on native/ecological landscaping best practices.

The movement towards ecological landscaping is already upon us, we need better labeling of native plants and funded positions to help support this critical shift of how we manage our lands that is vital to our own health and well being. Please support the Maryland Native Plants Program!

Thank you for your work on behalf of all Marylanders and thank you for taking my testimony into consideration.

Sincerely, Lauren Hubbard