



Testimony of the Mayor and Council of Rockville
SB 915 – Agriculture – Invasive Plant Species – Regulation
(Biodiversity and Agriculture Protection Act)
SUPPORT

Good afternoon, Chairman Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee. The Mayor and Council of Rockville are thankful for the opportunity to provide written comments on SB 915.

The City of Rockville Mayor and Council unanimously support SB 915. The legislation replaces the existing invasive plants regulatory approach with a new framework that involves the assessment of non-native plant species by expert assessors to determine the invasiveness rank of each species; review of the assessments; and determination by the Secretary of Agriculture whether such species should be classified as “prohibited invasive plants” to be included on a Consolidated List of Maryland Plant Species or a watch list. On an annual basis, the Maryland Department of Agriculture would be required to distribute the list to nurseries, plant dealers, and plant brokers.

SB 915 aligns with Rockville’s Climate Action Plan, which seeks to protect and enhance wildlife habitat, encourages the management of non-native invasive species, and increases biodiversity, carbon sequestration, ecosystem health, and resiliency. The legislation recognizes that invasive plant species are destructive to our communities and cause ecological, economic, environmental, and harm to human health.

According to the US Department of Agriculture, the economic and social impacts of invasive species include both direct effects of a species on property values, agricultural productivity, public utility operations, native fisheries, tourism, and outdoor recreation, as well as costs associated with invasive species control efforts. Many of our Rockville residents have expressed concerns about the proliferation of invasive plant species on their properties, the difficulty in removing the plants, and the associated costs.

SB 915 is smart public policy that creates a stronger regulatory framework for controlling non-native invasive plant growth across the State. Proactive invasive plant regulation is critical to building sustainable and biodiverse ecosystems within the City of Rockville and across the State of Maryland. For these reasons, we urge the Committee to provide SB 915 with a favorable report.