



Laurel for the Patuxent
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Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Testimony on: SB915 “Agriculture - Invasive Plant Species – Regulation (Biodiversity and Agriculture Protection Act)”

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: March 5, 2024

Laurel for the Patuxent strongly supports SB915. We ask that the committee report favorably on the bill.

Laurel for the Patuxent (“L4P”) is a small, dedicated group of Laurel residents who try to protect our stretch of the Upper Patuxent River and the surrounding watershed. We are perhaps best known in town for our vine clearing days, where we travel up and down Riverfront Park to remove English Ivy from the trees along the riverbanks. It’s tough work, as we need to sort out which plants are which, cut through woody vines, and avoid damaging the trees. Each year new vines make their way back up the trees, so our task never ends. However, the more ivy we can remove, the fewer trees will be killed or dragged down in our beautiful park.

Another invasive species threatening our riverbanks is Japanese Knotweed. It grows quickly and crowds out other plants. If a small piece breaks off and floats down the river, a new colony can readily form. As a result, we have multiple areas of dense knotweed along the Upper Patuxent. We tried partnering with a biologist at Patuxent Research Refuge to “cut and paint” with herbicides, but the project proved ineffective in controlling the spread.

English Ivy and the Japanese Knotweed are both invasive species introduced to the US for ornamental purposes. The bill will help us and other organizations around Maryland better manage the spread of invasive species in two ways:

1. Banning the sale of these plants at nurseries, which helps reduce their spread from residential gardens back into our wild places.
2. Speeding up the rate at which new species can be classified as invasive, which will help stop emerging invasive species from getting a foothold, no matter their curb appeal.

I help create new wildlife-friendly gardens both with L4P directly and in partnership with non-profits and homeowners around the City of Laurel. Most of the novice gardeners I meet are constantly surprised by the number of invasive plants that were in the ground when they bought their homes and the number of invasive plants that they bought themselves from garden centers they thought they could trust. Please help rid our nurseries of these plants that harm our forests, and help new gardeners find more beneficial plants instead. A favorable report on this bill will be an important step in that direction.

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