

KATIE FRY HESTER
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Howard and Montgomery Counties

Education, Energy, and
Environment Committee

Chair, Joint Committee on
Cybersecurity, Information Technology
and Biotechnology



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of SB 683 - Tree Expert Licenses - Renewal Fee Alterations

February 19, 2024

Chairman Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee:

I am here today to present SB 683, Tree Expert Licenses - Renewal Fee Alterations, which is similar in nature to SB 586 that this committee heard during the 2023 legislative session.

Last year, this committee heard testimony regarding the dangerous nature of the tree trimming industry, not just to those who work in the field, but also to the environment and to the consumer when tree care is performed improperly. A significant cause for concern has been the lack of oversight, putting workers and land owners at risk - due in part to the Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) slow response time to complaints submitted because of lack of staffing and resources.

Last year, the Maryland Arborists Association (MAA) expressed concern over a provision of SB 586, which limited the number of companies that an individual's license could be listed under. After extensive meetings with the MAA, DNR, and industry members, we have drafted a bill that addresses the same problem we attempted to tackle last year, but this time with support from all stakeholders involved.

SB 683 as drafted removes the cap on application and renewal fees for Tree Expert Licenses. By allowing DNR to increase the fee, which is currently set at \$30 to cover the cost of processing applications, we provide necessary funding for them to bring on desperately needed staff to implement a Forest and Tree service program that is effective, reliable, and informative.

My office has also offered an amendment to the committee that would specify a cap on the cost of application and renewal fees by DNR. **I respectfully request a favorable report on SB683.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katie Fry Hester".

Senator Katie Fry Hester
Howard and Montgomery Counties