



Maryland Farm Bureau

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March 4th, 2024

To: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc

RE: **Support with Amendment – SB915 Agriculture - Invasive Plant Species - Regulation (Biodiversity and Agriculture Protection Act)**

On behalf of the member families of the Maryland Farm Bureau, I provide informational testimony on SB915 - Agriculture - Invasive Plant Species – Regulation. The membership of the Maryland Farm Bureau is diverse and includes many involved in traditional agriculture, but also members who are involved in the nursery and greenhouse industries. This bill would alter the regulatory approach for controlling invasive plant species in the State, including repealing certain provisions of law relating to a two-tiered regulatory approach and requiring the Secretary of Agriculture to establish a list of prohibited invasive plants by regulation in a certain manner on or before October 1, 2024. The bill would also establish certain protocols for assessing certain nonnative plants and determining whether those plants are invasive or whether the plants may be placed on a watch list.

Maryland farmers are faced with challenges handling noxious weeds, two of the most challenging being *Amaranthus palmeri* (Palmer Amaranth) and *Ailanthus* (Tree of Heaven). The Tree of Heaven has been especially detrimental to vineyards in the state, as it is the preferred home of the Spotted Lantern Fly. This insect has been responsible for large areas of damage for the fruit producers in the state. The opportunity for both species to be placed on the invasive plant species regulation would be beneficial to farmers in the state.

For those member families involved in the nursery and greenhouse industries, there are concerns with the quick implementation date of October 2024, and the clarity of the plant species that would be included on the list. Maryland Farm Bureau supports the amendments that were discussed by the House Sponsor that would add clarity to these concerns.

MDFB Policy: We urge the state to eliminate from the list those species (threatened or endangered) that might have limited numbers in Maryland but are common elsewhere. We strongly urge the Maryland Department of Agriculture to have phragmites, *Rosa multiflora* (multi-flora rose) (except when used as rootstock by the nursery industry), *Microstegium vimineum* (Japanese stilt grass), *Amaranthus palmeri* (Palmer Amaranth), Asiatic tearthumb (mile-a-minute vine or kudzu), *Celastrus orbiculatus* (Asiatic bittersweet vine) and *Ailanthus* (Tree of Heaven) placed on the noxious weed list. We urge the SHA to submit a realistic fiscal impact statement related to adding palmer amaranth to the noxious weed list.

Tyler Hough
Director of Government Relations