



February 26, 2024

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of Chesapeake Nurseries, a wholesale container nursery founded in 1962, consisting of over 1200 greenhouses on 600 acres of production space, we are writing to express our concerns regarding Bills HB979 and SB915, which we feel would pose a significant negative impact on our business. As a dedicated cultivator and provider of a wide range of ornamental plants to not only Maryland, but much of the Mid Atlantic and Northeastern United States, our commitment to enhancing the natural beauty and biodiversity of our region has always been at the forefront of our operations. It is with this dedication in mind that we felt compelled to reach out.

While we fully understand and support the government's intention to protect our local ecosystems from potentially invasive species, we must also consider the impact of bans on certain species to not only our business, but that of the industry at large. In addition to the economic impact of these proposed bills, it is also our belief that there is a lack of specificity and consideration for ongoing efforts within our industry as it relates to the development of sterile cultivars of certain species.

Berberis thunbergii and Euonymus alatus, both potentially banned by these bills, have both had a considerable amount of work done in the development of certified sterile cultivars. These efforts, aimed at mitigating the risk these plants may pose to our ecosystems without eliminating their availability and benefits to our communities would be severely undermined by a blanket ban on many of these species. As it stands, bills HB979 and SB915 do not take into account these industry advancements. A blanket ban would not only undermine these efforts, but have a disproportionately negative impact on our business and the nursery and landscape industries in Maryland as a whole.

We currently grow 21 cultivars across 5 species which are potentially affected by this bill including; Berberis, thunbergii, Euonymus alatus, Spirea japonica, Nandina and Buddleia davidii which represent roughly \$1.73 million dollars in active inventory across various production stages of these crops and roughly one million dollars per year in planned production to meet the demands of our customers. It should be noted, that while these crops are important to us, they are a smaller portion of our overall production than is the case for many businesses in our industry who would be financially impacted even more strongly; many of these specific crops are industry staples in Maryland and across the country, especially in the retail garden center world.

The implementation of the proposed bans would have far-reaching implications beyond our industry. The economic repercussions for nurseries, landscapers and the ancillary businesses that depend on our industry cannot be overstated. This ban would limit the variety of plants available to our customers, impacting the aesthetic diversity of our landscapes by removing plants that in their sterile form, and/or with proper care, pose no threat.

We urge you to consider a more nuanced approach to this issue. Collaboration between the government and industry experts can lead to the development of regulations that protect our environment while also supporting the economic health and scientific progress within the nursery and landscaping



industries. Such an approach would ensure that policies provide a balanced solution that benefits both our ecosystems and the economy.

We respectfully request that the proposed bill, in its current form not be passed, and a re-evaluation with more careful consideration of its impact be undertaken.

Thank you for your attention to finding a solution that safeguards our environment while also preserving the vitality of Maryland's Nursery Industry. To that end, our team is ready to provide information or assistance needed to support this process. We look forward to the opportunity to contribute to a solution.

Sincerely,

Chesapeake Nurseries Ownership and Management