

ROLAND OEHME

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

February 22, 2024

SB915 Agriculture – Invasive Plant Species – Regulation

SB915: Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

SB915: Hearing March 5, 2024

FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and honorable members of the Committee,

I am in support of SB915, which would make it more efficient to assess which plants are invasive and add highly invasive plants to the state's prohibited from sale list. This bill is necessary since invasive plants are a silent epidemic that has been slowly overtaking our state and has now reached a critical mass that must be stopped.

In my job as a landscape architect, I specialize in designing native plant gardens. I am highly attuned to the trends in garden design and what plants are growing in our yards, parks, and natural areas. In the last ten or more years, I have become alarmed of the fact that invasive plants are everywhere and are increasing in number at an alarming rate. Typically, when I start a new garden design project, the first steps involve removing invasive plants that are choking my clients' landscape. This adds an extra cost for my clients that usually the previous owner(s) had installed. Most homeowners have very little knowledge about invasive plants and why it is so important to plant native plants. The reasons are many, but chiefly because native plants support our native insects and wildlife, and invasive plants don't. A big problem with invasive plants is that once planted, they never leave, and in fact, they will continue spreading to adjoining properties and into natural areas unless corrective action is taken.

I enjoy visiting the local Cromwell Valley Park in Towson, and I am dumbfounded by the quantity of invasive plants growing for decades in the meadows, forests, and along streams. I am frankly shocked that the state or county does nothing to remove these invasive plants. There is only one volunteer organization that makes a minor dent in removing invasive plants from this park but simply does not have the resources to remove them from the whole park. This park is a small microcosm of what is happening all over our state.

The most rampant invasive plants I have seen are Autumn Olive, Border Privet, Bradford or Callery Pear, Burning Bush, Bush Honeysuckle, Butterfly Bush, Chinese Silvergrass, Chinese and Japanese Wisteria, English Ivy, Garlic Mustard, Japanese Honeysuckle, Japanese Barberry, Japanese Knotweed, Japanese Stiltgrass, Kudzu, Lesser Celandine, Mile A Minute Vine, Multiflora Rose, Nandina, Norway Maple, Oriental Bittersweet, Porcelain Berry, Princess Tree, Running Bamboo, Tree of Heaven, Vinca, Wavyleaf Basketgrass, Wineberry, and Winter Creeper.

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Passing this bill and placing more invasive plants on the prohibited list is necessary to stop this incursion into our state. If we don't, eventually invasive plants will take over our state, and we will have lost our identity. This bill is also needed to help educate the public and increase awareness that there are many invasive plants out there that are doing a great deal of harm to our environment. I ask for a favorable report on SB915.

Respectfully,

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