



February 26, 2024

To: Maryland House Committee on Environment and Transportation

Re: HB 979

Position: Support

Hearing Date: February 28, 2024

On behalf of the Chesapeake Conservation Landscaping Council (CCLC), I am writing in support of HB979. CCLC is a coalition of individuals and organizations dedicated to promoting conservation-based landscaping practices to benefit the Chesapeake Bay. CCLC educates and supports professionals to implement sustainable landscape and green infrastructure practices for a healthy and resilient Chesapeake Bay watershed. The Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professional (CBLP) certification is CCLC's signature training and education program, through which we have trained over 1500 people since 2016.

Invasive plant species pose a significant ecological threat to Maryland's natural areas in all regions of our state, are a nuisance and an eyesore for landowners, and increasingly require vast investments of time and money to manage. Few private landowners or government agencies have the resources to effectively manage invasive plants. But, left unchecked, invasive plants crowd out native species, provide little or no benefit for wildlife, and reduce biodiversity. We support this proposed legislation which will prohibit harmful invasive plants from being purchased, sold, or propagated in Maryland. This bill includes aquatic invaders that are impacting our streams and rivers and the Chesapeake Bay, and will institute a professionally-recognized status assessment protocol to replace the current approach used in Maryland. These steps will help our state to address invasive plants more quickly and ultimately reduce management costs later.

As an organization that is focused on training across the Chesapeake Bay region, we recognize the important role of trained professionals to assess and manage invasive plant species. Importantly, this legislation will also provide the Maryland Department of Agriculture and the Department of Natural Resources with needed staff to perform regular assessment and inspections so our state can respond rapidly and appropriately to known and future ecological threats from invasive plants.

We urge you to consider this bill favorably to protect Maryland from invasive plants.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth P. Ginter
Executive Director