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Subject: Written Testimony for HB979 and SB915

FOR HOUSE TESTIMONY
Committee: Environment and Transportation
Testimony on: HB979
"Agriculture - Invasive Plant Species - Regulation
(Biodiversity and Agriculture Protection Act"

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date:
February 28, 2024

FOR SENATE TESTIMONY
Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment
Testimony on: SB915
"Agriculture - Invasive Plant Species - Regulation
(Biodiversity and Agriculture Protection Act"

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date:
March 5, 2024

The purpose of this letter is to underline the necessity and urgency as well as the simple logic and common sense of passing the "Biodiversity and Agriculture Protection Act." I would like to express my favor for both HB979 and SB915 over the following 3 points:

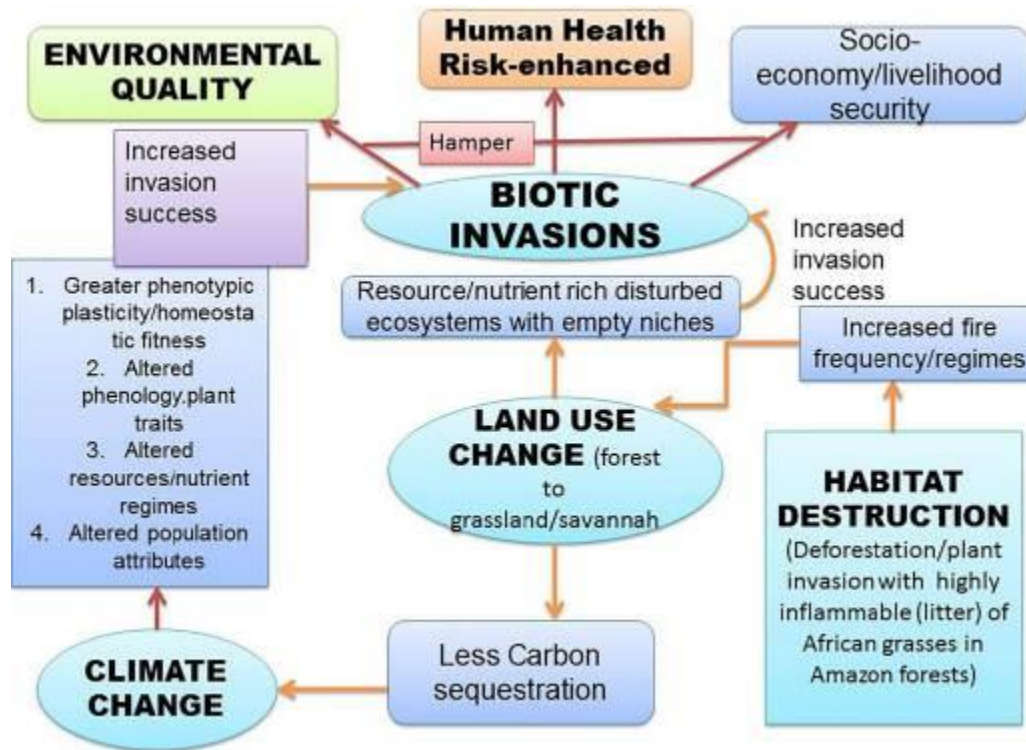
Point 1: Personal Experience

As a long-time resident of Howard County (40 years), I can personally attest to the encroachment of numerous plant species that have impacted my gardening efforts (spanning 2 properties and about 1.5 acres). Not only has the encroachment of numerous invasive species (e.g., Chinese Wisteria, English Ivy, Asian Bittersweet, Japanese Honeysuckle, Multiflora Rose, etc.) constrained my capacity to fully use my property but it has required significant expenses over the years in a continuous attempt to mitigate the invasive plant species while also degrading the appearance (and potentially value) of the properties. In addition, I have noticed while walking through the Patapsco State Park as well as driving past undeveloped areas near the park (e.g., River Rd in Baltimore County, Bonnie Branch Rd in Howard, etc.) the steady encroachment of several invasive species that appear to be clearly displacing native plants, at the expense of the enjoyment of experiencing the park both by virtue of the decrease in the natural beauty but also by virtue of concern over the long term impact on both animal and plant species that once thrived in the park.

Point 2: Addressing this Issue is Clearly Necessitated from a Global Perspective

Numerous articles (including those found in the peer reviewed literature) have analyzed the potential impact of invasive plant species. In particular, Kumar et al. (Kumar Rai P, Singh JS. Invasive alien plant species: Their impact on environment, ecosystem services and human health. *Ecol Indic.* 2020 Apr;111:106020. doi: 10.1016/j.ecolind.2019.106020. Epub 2020 Jan 9. PMID: 32372880; PMCID: PMC7194640) have determined that invasive plant species are currently having a profound impact on the viability of ecosystems with corresponding impacts on human health and corresponding socio-economic effects. The figure below (from Kumar et al.) illustrates the complex interrelations between

invasive plant species and both the natural eco-system and the human/societal ecosystem (which is rally a subset of the natural ecosystem). It is clearly not only prudent but also a resounding necessity to address this issue in a timely, decisive, and effective manner.



Point 3: Addressing this Issue is Clearly Necessitated from a Local Perspective

While Maryland faces the same potential dire consequences of invasive plant species as the world as a whole, it must be acknowledged Maryland has distinctive aspects of this problem by virtue of its unique and geographically variable set of ecosystems as well as its unique and geographically variable pattern of development and human habitations. In other words, the process of resolving the problem in Maryland must account for invasive plant propagation driven by urbanization. This bill clearly addresses this dimension of the problem by curtailing the public access to problematic plant species in a timely manner. However, it must be recognized that this is merely an essential initial step. Any ultimate solution must engage the public awareness of this issue; this bill in part does this by opening an additional avenue for informing the public of importance of this bill in the context of the choices people make in their own lives. Additional avenues for engaging public awareness in the educational system would also seem prudent. The proliferation of invasive species in the public parks or in formerly forested areas should also be addressed. For example, Angela Discoll ("The effect of treefall gaps on the spatial distribution of three invasive plants in a mature upland forest in Maryland," *The Journal of the Torrey*

Botanical Society, 143(4): 349-358) has determined that gaps in the forest canopies in Maryland provide opportunistic footholds for invasive plant species. Perhaps follow-on legislation could address this issue specifically using, for example, air-borne technologies for identifying these areas and responding accordingly to prevent further propagation of invasive plants and further degradation of the ecosystems.

In summary, I feel that the lack of addressing the problem of invasive species by passing this bill would be an unfortunate lost opportunity for providing vital stewardship of our state and demonstrate an ignominious insensitivity the future lives of our children. It also makes economic sense now, in the short term, and in the long term from all perspectives.