



HB979

Agriculture-Invasive Plant Species - Regulatory (Biodiversity And Agriculture Protection Act)

Testimony before House Environment and Transportation Committee

Hearing February, 28, 2024

Position: Favorable

Dear Chair Korman and Vice-Chair Boyce, and members of the committee, our names are Ann Coren and Virginia Smith, and we represent the 700+ members of Indivisible Howard County. Indivisible Howard County is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members). We are providing written testimony today **in support of Bill HB979**, which would alter the regulatory approach for controlling invasive species in the State.

Invasive species are a growing problem in Maryland. They can monopolize natural resources by outcompeting native plants. Human health is put at risk by creating habitat that increases the spread of disease, such as Lyme Disease. Human health is also put at risk by the extensive use of herbicides to attempt to control invasive species on farms and in yards.

Invasive species cost the State a significant amount of money. In 2000, it was estimated that invasive species cost the US \$137 billion annually (which is \$239 billion in today's dollars). Volunteers spend endless hours in the State and County Parks, and homeowners spend undue time in their yards removing invasive species. The time and money could be better spent.

Invasive species weaken our State forest's resilience to the Climate Crises as native species are put under stress and we lose the genetic biodiversity that resilient forests require.

For these reasons and more, **HB979** is a must pass bill this session. This bill would increase the number of plant species that are prohibited for sale in Maryland, as well as allow for the prohibition of aquatic invaders impacting our waterways and of plants not currently available for sale at local retailers. Finally, it would also replace Maryland's existing, time-consuming risk assessment tool with a more efficient status assessment protocol.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

We respectfully urge a favorable report for HB979.

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