



Wes Moore, Governor
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor
Josh Kurtz, Secretary
David Goshorn, Deputy Secretary

February 4, 2026

BILL NUMBER: HOUSE BILL 35 – FIRST READER

SHORT TITLE: LOCAL GOVERNMENT-REGULATORY POWERS-REGULATION OF TREE OF HEAVEN

DEPARTMENT’S POSITION: SUPPORT

EXPLANATION OF DEPARTMENT’S POSITION

The Department supports HB 35 due to its potential to improve ecological protection of native species in areas experiencing high environmental stressors. Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) is an exceptionally aggressive invasive species that rapidly outcompetes native trees and understory plants that provide essential habitat and food resources for wildlife. Its exceptionally rapid growth rate and ability to produce viable seed within two to three years enables it to outcompete in urban forests and natural areas within a short timeframe.

By authorizing local governments to regulate and incentivize the removal of Tree of Heaven, the bill strengthens invasive species management at the community level, supporting forest resilience and long-term ecological health.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Tree of Heaven is widely recognized as a highly invasive deciduous tree species throughout North America, capable of forming dense stands that displace native vegetation while releasing soil chemicals that inhibit the growth of surrounding plants.

In addition to its direct ecological impacts, Tree of Heaven serves as the preferred host for the spotted lanternfly, another invasive species responsible for agricultural damage and increased stress on native plant communities statewide.

Urban forests and environmentally stressed areas are particularly vulnerable to infestation, where native species already face challenges related to soil compaction, heat, limited rooting space, and pollution. Without careful, thorough, proactive management, infestations can spread rapidly following the introduction of a single specimen.

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BILL EXPLANATION

HB 35 amends the Local Government Article to authorize counties and municipalities to adopt ordinances regulating Tree of Heaven. The bill allows local governments to:

- Prohibit the sale and planting of Tree of Heaven;
- Require property owners to prevent Tree of Heaven from growing on their land;
- Enforce ordinances through mitigation requirements and civil fines; and
- Establish bounty programs to incentivize the removal of Tree of Heaven.

The legislation expands existing local authority that currently applies to invasive bamboo to include Tree of Heaven as a regulated invasive species.

This bill would provide local governments with tools to implement education, enforcement, and removal programs that can yield significant long-term ecological benefits and reduce the spread of *Ailanthus altissima* across Maryland's landscape.