

# **HB255.FAVORABLE.ShoreRivers.pdf**

Uploaded by: Annie Richards

Position: FAV



## Testimony in Support of House Bill 255 – Natural Resources -Pamela J. Kelly Tree-Mendous Maryland Program - Alterations

February 9, 2026

Dear Chairman Feldman,

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in **SUPPORT** of **HB255** on behalf of ShoreRivers. ShoreRivers is a river protection organization on Maryland's Eastern Shore with more than 2,000 members. *Our mission is to protect Maryland's Eastern Shore waterways through science-based advocacy, restoration, education, and engagement.*

This legislation **strengthens the Pamela J. Kelly Tree-Mendous Maryland Program by expanding its purpose to include the advancement of forest health and resilience through the promotion and maintenance of native trees and shrubs on public lands, community spaces, schools, and rights-of-way.** Forests and tree canopy are essential natural infrastructure for clean water and healthy communities. Trees absorb stormwater, reduce runoff pollution, filter airborne pollutants, and provide critical habitat for wildlife. For communities throughout the Eastern Shore and Chesapeake Bay watershed, expanding tree planting and maintenance efforts is a **proven, cost-effective strategy to improve water quality and resilience to climate impacts** such as erosion and increasingly-severe weather events.

ShoreRivers' on-the-ground restoration efforts consistently demonstrate that projects incorporating trees yield measurable water quality improvements and community benefits. ShoreRivers works with volunteers, students, landowners, and municipalities on tree planting and watershed stewardship initiatives throughout our region. We regularly see firsthand how access to healthy, native plantings engages citizens in environmental action and enhances local landscapes. Unfortunately, a major challenge to the continued success of these restoration projects is the lack of available funding for maintenance activities to ensure that these plantings are effective beyond the term of the grant funding used to install them. **By broadening the existing Tree-Mendous program's purpose to explicitly include resilience and maintenance, HB255 aligns program priorities with community needs and environmental changes.** It builds upon an already successful statewide initiative and creates a stronger foundation for interagency partnerships, community engagement, and long-term ecological success.

For these reasons, ShoreRivers **urges a favorable report on House Bill 255** and encourages the legislature to support policies that invest in tree canopy, watershed health, and resilient natural systems across Maryland.

Sincerely,  
**Annie Richards, Chester Riverkeeper** on behalf of:

### ShoreRivers

Scott Budden, Executive Director

Annie Richards, Chester Riverkeeper | Matt Pluta, Choptank Riverkeeper

Ben Ford, Miles Wye Riverkeeper | Zack Kelleher, Sassafras Riverkeeper

# **HB 255 Tree-Mendous Maryland Program Alterations (**

Uploaded by: Cait Kerr

Position: FAV

**Wednesday, February 11, 2026**

**TO:** Delegate Marc Korman, Chair, House Environment and Transportation Committee, and Committee Members

**FROM:** Humna Sharif, Climate Adaptation Manager, The Nature Conservancy; Cait Kerr, State Policy Manager, The Nature Conservancy,

**POSITION:** Support HB255 Natural Resources - Pamela J. Kelly Tree-Mendous Maryland Program - Alterations

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) supports HB255 offered by the Department of Natural Resources and sponsored by Chair Korman. TNC is a global conservation organization working to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. In Maryland, our work focuses on delivering data-driven, on-the-ground solutions that secure clean water, air, and healthy, secure living environments for our human and natural communities today and in the generations to come.

The Tree-mendous Maryland Program is vital for helping Marylanders restore tree cover in the state. More than 3000 towns communities and parks in the state have benefitted from the program. Tree-mendous Maryland's goal is to help Maryland residents have access to affordable trees to plant on their public lands. With permission from landowners, volunteers can plant trees at schools, in state and community parks, local open space, street trees and more.<sup>1</sup>

While the program currently supports tree plantings, HB255 will improve its implementation by providing DNR the ability to use program resources for maintenance of native trees and shrubs on public lands.

TNC commends Chair Korman and DNR on introducing this bill. HB255 will promote forest health and resilience in the state long term. **Therefore, we urge a favorable report on HB255.**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://dnr.maryland.gov/forests/pages/treemendous/default.aspx>

# **HB255\_CE\_Calvin\_Ball\_FAV**

Uploaded by: Calvin Ball

Position: FAV



## HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

3430 Courthouse Drive ■ Ellicott City, Maryland 21043 ■ 410-313-2013 Voice/Relay

Calvin Ball  
Howard County Executive  
cball@howardcountymd.gov

www.howardcountymd.gov  
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February 6, 2026

Delegate Marc Korman, Chair  
Environment and Transportation Committee  
250 Taylor House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT of House Bill 255**: Natural Resources – Pamela J. Kelly Tree–Mendous Maryland Program – Alterations

Dear Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and Members of the Committee:

Forests and tree canopy are foundational to the health of our ecosystems, economies, and quality of life, but we continue to experience overall tree loss at national, state, and local levels. The state and County have worked diligently to increase our tree planting efforts, which is essential to expand overall tree cover. However, the data show that we cannot plant our way out of net tree loss.

Our forests and reforestation plantings are challenged by invasive species, drought, deer overpopulation, insect infestation, and other threats. Maintenance of new plantings and threatened forests are both critical for reaching Maryland's net gain canopy goal, as well as Howard County's goal of attaining 50% tree canopy by 2030.

In 2024, I had the honor of signing a Memorandum of Understanding on climate and sustainability cooperation with Maryland Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) Secretary Josh Kurtz to promote opportunities to boost tree plantings and tackle invasive species that threaten forests. With Howard County's support, in Spring 2025 MDNR planted 46,800 trees across 109 acres in Howard County. With additional County support, we anticipate that MDNR will plant another 9,500 trees across some 22 acres in Howard County in Spring 2026.

To date, since I became Howard County Executive, in December of 2018, Howard County has planted more than 150,000 trees, invested \$3.5 million to preserve 80 acres of forest stand through an innovative easement program, and enacted one of the strongest local Forest Conservation Acts in the state. We also launched a new "Tree Savers" program that empowers residents to remove invasive vines from trees in our parks and communities, prolonging the trees' lives and services, benefitting our constituents.

HB255 would allow funds from the Pamela J. Kelly TreeMendous Maryland Program to be used by MDNR for the maintenance of trees and shrubs on public lands. To help protect our forests, young and old, Howard County requests the Committee's **favorable report for HB255**.

All the Best,



## HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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**Calvin Ball**  
**Howard County Executive**

# **HB255 - MDLCV FAV\_ TreeMendous Maryland Program AI**

Uploaded by: Marisa Olszewski

Position: FAV



**MARYLAND  
LEAGUE OF  
CONSERVATION  
VOTERS**

**Maryland LCV  
Board of Directors**

Patrick Miller  
*Chair*

Honorable Nancy Kopp  
*Treasurer*  
Bonnie Norman  
*Secretary*

Kimberly Armstrong  
Caroline Baker  
Joe Gill  
Lynn Heller  
Honorable Steve Lafferty  
Kevin Loeb

Kim Coble  
*Executive Director*

February 11, 2026

**SUPPORT: Natural Resources - Pamela J. Kelly Tree-Mendous Maryland Program - Alterations**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Maryland LCV supports HB 255 Natural Resources - Pamela J. Kelly Tree-Mendous Maryland Program - Alterations. We thank the Department of Natural Resources for this legislation to improve natural resource management in Maryland.

Maryland LCV has long supported efforts to preserve, expand, and support the health and resilience of our forests and tree canopies statewide.

HB 255 will allow the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to expand the allowable uses of funds within the Pamela J. Kelly Tree-Mendous Maryland program to include maintenance as well as education. Property and land managers often express a need for financial assistance with maintenance of trees, not just support for their planting. Adding this flexibility to the program with this legislation will enable DNR to better respond to on-the-ground needs across the state. This program amendment will better support land managers in maintaining healthy forest and trees on public lands and open spaces, which, in turn, offers tremendous benefits for health, air quality, and climate resilience.

By updating the Tree-Mendous program in this way, DNR is demonstrating responsiveness and effective stewardship of public resources. SB 164 will ensure this successful and widely supported program delivers greater, lasting benefits for Maryland's forest and trees.

Maryland LCV respectfully requests a favorable report on this bill.

30 West Street, Suite C  
Annapolis, MD 21401  
Phone: 410-280-9855

**[www.mdlc.org](http://www.mdlc.org)**

**HB0255\_WildOnesChesapeakeBayChapter\_FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Marlene Smith

Position: FAV



Wild Ones Chesapeake Bay  
15321 Colony Place  
Waldorf, MD 20601  
240-416-7108  
[chesapeakebay@wildoneschapters.org](mailto:chesapeakebay@wildoneschapters.org)

*Deeply rooted in native plants,  
promoting native landscapes  
through education, advocacy and  
collaborative action.*

**Testimony:** HB0255, Natural Resources - Pamela J. Kelly Tree-Mendous Maryland Program - Alterations

**Committee:** Environment and Transportation

**Hearing Date:** February 11, 2026

**Position:** FAVORABLE

Chair, Marc Korman; Vice Chair, Michele Guyton, and honorable members of the Committee:

Located in Southern Maryland, Wild Ones Chesapeake Bay<sup>1</sup>, a 71-member chapter of the national organization Wild Ones<sup>2</sup>, **strongly urges your support for this bill** requested by the MD DNR. The promotion and maintenance of native trees will have a far-reaching positive impact on our state's forest health and resilience in these trying times of climate change.

Native trees in Maryland, such as white oak and red maple, are crucial for supporting local biodiversity, which in turn protects our treasured Chesapeake Bay. From 1999 to 2019, Maryland lost approximately 6,000 acres of forest each year due to development, totaling around 118,000 acres over that two-decade period. Recent studies indicate that while the rate of loss has slowed, development remains a significant cause of forest loss in the state.<sup>3</sup>

We must be vigilant in restoring our native trees. Why? Because native trees:

- **Reduce runoff and filter rainwater:** Their deep root systems reduce soil erosion and runoff, and improve water infiltration, which helps protect the health of the Chesapeake Bay.
- **Support Wildlife:** Native trees provide essential food (nuts, fruit, sap) and shelter for birds, pollinators, and small mammals. Native trees host up to 29 times more wildlife, including birds and pollinators, than non-native species. And our native oaks can support over 530 species of butterfly and moth caterpillars.
- **Improve Environmental Resilience:** Native trees are adapted to local soil and weather conditions (hot, humid summers; cold winters), making them hardier and more resistant to pests and diseases.
- **Mitigate Climate Change:** They help cool the environment, reducing air conditioning costs for homes and businesses.
- **Sequester Carbon:** Maryland's forests and urban trees act as significant carbon sinks, absorbing millions of metric tons of carbon dioxide annually.

Modifying the Tree-Mendous Maryland Program to specify native trees compliments the Maryland Native Plant Program (MNPP) passed in 2023, which can and should provide education to support the TREE-mendous Maryland program in reaching its goal of planting 5 million trees by 2031. Please support this bill and help us promote native trees to preserve our treasured Chesapeake Bay for future generations.

Wildly appreciative,

*Marlene Smith*  
President, Wild Ones Chesapeake Bay

<sup>1</sup>Wild Ones Chesapeake Bay Chapter, <https://chesapeakebay.wildones.org/>

<sup>2</sup>Wild Ones Natural Landscapers, LTD, a nationwide nonprofit organization with local chapters throughout the country, including 5 chapters in Maryland, <https://wildones.org/>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.bayjournal.com/news/growth\\_conservation/maryland-still-losing-forests-and-trees-though-at-a-slower-rate-study-finds/article\\_b1ddd3b0-675e-11ed-9ea9-072671365ff9.html](https://www.bayjournal.com/news/growth_conservation/maryland-still-losing-forests-and-trees-though-at-a-slower-rate-study-finds/article_b1ddd3b0-675e-11ed-9ea9-072671365ff9.html)

# **HB 255 Tree-Mendous testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Dorie Broadman

Position: FWA



*Promoting native landscapes through education,  
advocacy and collaborative action.  
Contact:wildonesnationscapital@gmail.com*

**Testimony: HB 255, Natural Resources – Pamela J. Kelly Tree-Mendous Maryland Program**  
**Committee: Environment and Transportation**  
**Hearing Date: February 11, 2026**  
**Position: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS**

Chair, Marc Korman; Vice Chair, Michele Guyton; and Honorable Members of the Committee:

Wild Ones Nation's Capital Region, a 250- member chapter of the national organization, "Wild Ones".<sup>1</sup> requests your support for this bill with one amendment as described in the last paragraph of this testimony.

The current legislation limits the activity to "planting" native shrubs and trees without explaining the purpose of planting natives. The proposed changes to include explanatory language, "advancing forest health and resilience" and adding "maintaining" native shrubs and trees are needed improvements. Maintaining plantings through actions such as watering young plants and removing invasive vines give native trees and shrubs the chance to grow to maturity.

Please amend the bill by adding language to clarify that maintenance includes prioritizing the protection of native plants of all types.

Please approve this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "D. Broadman".

Dorothy Broadman  
Director, Legislative Affairs

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pru Foster".

Pru Foster  
President

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<sup>1</sup> Wild Ones, a nationwide nonprofit organization with local chapters throughout the country,

**HB0255\_DNR\_SWA\_ENT\_2-11-26.pdf**

Uploaded by: Josh Kurtz

Position: FWA



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

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February 11, 2026

**BILL NUMBER: HOUSE BILL 255**

**SHORT TITLE: NATURAL RESOURCES – PAMELA J. KELLY TREE–MENDOUS MARYLAND PROGRAM – ALTERATIONS**

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS**

### **EXPLANATION OF DEPARTMENT'S POSITION**

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This proposed legislation will increase the Department's capacity to deliver a broader range of technical and financial resources to support statewide forest conservation goals.

In the decades since the Tree-Mendous Maryland Program was initially codified, Urban and Community Forestry has evolved into a holistic field of practice that extends beyond tree planting alone to include sustained collaboration with local governments, nonprofits, and community partners to deliver the full range of environmental, public health, and climate benefits provided by trees and forests in urban and suburban settings.

By authorizing program funds to be used for the promotion of forest health and resilience, as well as the maintenance of planted trees, this legislation aligns statutory authority with contemporary best practices in urban forestry and ensures that public investments in tree planting result in successful establishment and long-term survival.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

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Tree-Mendous Maryland, has been helping citizens restore tree cover on public land and community open space in Maryland since 1989. This program aims to increase the number of trees in Maryland, providing residents with access to affordable trees for public lands, parks, and community spaces, fostering a greener Maryland through relationship building and lasting community involvement. Since 2022, over 50,000 trees have been planted using Tree-Mendous Maryland funds.

Since 2021, Maryland residents applying to renew their vehicle registration have the option to make a donation to the Tree-Mendous Maryland program due to an agreement between the Department and the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration/Maryland Department of Transportation. The program has seen a significant revenue increase since the implementation of this donation mechanism.

Contact: Lydia McPherson, Director, Legislative and Constituent Services  
[lydia.mcpherson1@maryland.gov](mailto:lydia.mcpherson1@maryland.gov) ♦ 410-260-8113 (office) ♦ 443-875-7785 (cell)

## BILL EXPLANATION

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The bill clarifies that the purpose of the Tree-Mendous Maryland Program is to advance forest health and resilience and expands its scope to include the promotion and maintenance of native trees. This targeted change would significantly improve the Department's ability to deploy program funds, enabling the Maryland Forest Service to address critical forest management needs beyond planting and to deliver a broader range of resources in support of statewide forest conservation.

BY:

(To be offered in the Environment and Transportation Committee)

### AMENDMENTS TO HOUSE BILL 255 (First Reading File Bill)

#### AMENDMENT NO. 1

On page 1, strike "the" in line 5 down through "through" in line 6; in line 6, after "promotion" insert "of community participation in tree planting and stewardship"; and in the same line, after "shrubs" insert "through community forestry activities".

#### AMENDMENT NO. 2

On page 1, strike beginning with "ADVANCING" in line 19 down through "BY" in line 20; in line 20, after "PROMOTING" insert "COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN TREE PLANTING AND STEWARDSHIP"; and in the same line, after "shrubs" insert "THROUGH COMMUNITY FORESTRY ACTIVITIES".

# **HB0255\_Maryland Native Plant Society\_Fonda, Fulton**

Uploaded by: Judith Fulton

Position: FWA



# Maryland Native Plant Society

APPRECIATION CONSERVATION EDUCATION

**Testimony:** HB0255, Natural Resources – Pamela J. Kelly Tree-Mendous Maryland - Alterations  
**Committee:** Environment and Transportation  
**Hearing Date:** February 11, 2026  
**Position:** FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

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

The Maryland Native Plant Society (MNPS) urges a favorable report on House Bill 255 with amendments. For 37 years, the Tree-Mendous Maryland Program has proven to be a successful and popular program “aimed at restoring tree cover on public land and community open space.” ([dnr.maryland.gov/forests/Pages/treemendous](http://dnr.maryland.gov/forests/Pages/treemendous)). Still, there is room for improvement.

HB0255 broadens the “purpose of the Pamela J. Kelly Tree-Mendous Maryland Program to include the advancement of forest health and resilience through the promotion and maintenance of native trees and shrubs.” The original law only included “planting” of trees and shrubs; however, those plants frequently died, especially in the first few years. Allowing program funding to be used for maintenance would boost plant survival and so reduce costs over the long-term. Furthermore, spending more on promotion would increase the Program’s reach to more Marylanders, including underserved populations with less access to natural areas.

We believe that HB0255 can be improved by clarifying that “advancing forest health and resilience” and “maintaining” do not include the logging of trees or any other potentially destructive practices. Instead, the bill should prioritize the long-term establishment of trees and shrubs, tree canopy, and woodland areas. Consequently, we respectfully request the addition of the following definition or the equivalent:

**“Maintaining native trees and shrubs” means protecting the plantings with standard maintenance practices such as temporarily fencing to exclude deer, removal of invasive plants including vines, and treatment for invasive insects and pathogens. Maintenance does not include removing healthy native trees and shrubs.**

With HB0255 and this amendment, the Tree-Mendous Maryland Program will increase property values, result in long-term enjoyment for Marylanders, and help meet Statewide conservation objectives, including restoring the Chesapeake Bay. Furthermore, Maryland will have a healthier environment, reduce contributions to climate change by cooling and cleaning the air, and decrease spending on disaster recovery by reducing flooding.

**The Maryland Native Plant Society urges a favorable report with amendments on HB0255.**

Jill Fonda Allen  
Board, Maryland Native Plant Society  
[jill.fonda.cg@gmail.com](mailto:jill.fonda.cg@gmail.com)

Judy Fulton  
President, Maryland Native Plant Society  
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**HB 255\_MDSierraClub\_fav\_11Feb2026\_ENT.pdf**

Uploaded by: Michael Wilpers

Position: FWA



# SIERRA CLUB

MARYLAND CHAPTER

P.O. Box 278  
Riverdale, MD 20738

**Committee:** ENT  
**Testimony:** **HB 255: Natural Resources – Pamela J. Kelley Tree-mendous Maryland Program -- Alterations**  
**Position:** **Favorable with Amendments**  
**Hearing Date:** **February 11, 2026**

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club urges a favorable report, with amendments, on HB 255.

“Tree-mendous Maryland,” a program of the Maryland Forest Service, has been one of the most popular programs at the Department of Natural Resources since the program’s founding in 1989. It performs a much-needed service by helping citizens restore tree cover on public lands and community open spaces in Maryland. It has assisted more than 3,000 towns, community organizations, parks, and schools in acquiring and planting native trees and shrubs. These plants filter our water, absorb greenhouse gases, ameliorate the heat-island effect, provide wildlife habitat, and beautify our state.

To clarify that the program’s funds may be applied to maintenance as well as planting, this bill adds “stewardship” to the allowable costs covered. The bill makes it explicit that the program can support activities that nurture trees (such as watering in drought conditions) and protect them (such as caging to prevent deer damage). At the same time, the new reference to “community forestry activities” that we expect the sponsor to propose is intended to ensure that the program cannot be used for logging:

“The Program is established for the purpose of PROMOTING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN TREE PLANTING AND STEWARDSHIP, and for planting and maintaining native trees and shrubs THROUGH COMMUNITY FORESTRY ACTIVITIES on public lands, community open spaces, school grounds, and rights-of-way.”

**To further clarify its intent, we recommend that the bill incorporate a definition of “Community Forestry Activities” such that it “means nurturing of trees (by watering, for example) and protecting trees from damage (by caging, fencing, or removing invasive vines, for example), without the removal of healthy, mature, native trees.”**

For these reasons, and with these amendments, we urge a favorable report on HB 255.

Michael Wilpers  
Issue Lead  
wilpersm@gmail.com

Josh Tulkin  
Chapter Director  
Josh.Tulkin@MDSierra.org

Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America’s oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.