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Government Operations
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Public Health and
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February 11, 2020

House Bill 279

Real Property – Restrictions on Use – Low Impact Landscaping

Dear Chairman Barve, Vice Chair Stein, and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

I am here to ask for your support on HB279 to ensure that homeowner's organizations (HOAs) cannot impose unreasonable limitations on a property owner's low-impact landscaping. The bill is defining Low-Impact Landscaping as landscaping techniques that conserve water, lower maintenance costs, provide pollution prevention, and create habitat for wildlife.

This bill is requiring no restriction on use of the above mentioned gardens, including **any** kind of restriction imposed by Homeowner's Associations (HOA).

If a homeowner would like to garden in a sustainable way, they should not only be able to do so, we should be encouraging them. Gardening using low impact landscaping techniques reduces the amount of dangerous chemicals used by homeowners every year. It also reduces the amount of gasoline used by mowers, reduces the amount of toxic and carcinogenic pollutants emitted into the air, and reduces the amount of water used to maintain lawns and non-sustainable gardens.

There are other benefits to gardening this way. Sustainable gardening helps to keep the Chesapeake Bay healthy by reducing storm water runoff, Bio-Habitat and Pollinator Gardens support pollinator-friendly birds and insects that visit local gardens (leading to more and re-blooming flowers and increased fruit harvest), Rain Gardens make soil healthier by returning rainwater to the soil and filtering rainwater of excess nutrients, and Xeriscaping reduces or eliminates the need for supplemental water from irrigation. Planting of trees can also be part of low-impact landscaping, which keeps the air that we breathe cleaner.

As stated above, there are many advantages both ecologically and environmentally to Low-Impact gardening. As legislators, we are responsible for enacting laws that keep our air and water cleaner, and our environment healthier. By passing HB279, we will be doing exactly that.

I respectfully request a favorable report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Terri L. Hill, M.D.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Terri L. Hill, M.D.