



TO: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

FROM: Central Maryland Beekeepers Association

RE: HB 991 Natural Resources – Forest Mitigation Banks – Qualified Preservation

POSITION: OPPOSE

Central Maryland Beekeepers Association (CMBA) respectfully OPPOSES HB 991 and requests an unfavorable report from the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee.

Maryland beekeepers depend on a varied selection of well established, native species such as black locust, tulip poplar, catalpa, dogwood, redbud, and others that are essential to the health of pollinators and are necessary for honey production. Many of the trees that are essential for our bees and our livelihood are considered “junk trees” by arborists, landscapers, and nurseries. For an illustrative, but vivid, example of what beekeepers experience when old, native growth is removed and replaced without regard for bees, consider the following from one of our members:

When land near Herring Run Park in Baltimore County was denuded of its established, native species about five years ago the beekeeper experienced a dramatic reduction in honey yields and a dramatic reduction in hive survival. The trees removed included numerous black locust trees, perhaps the single most prolific blossom source for honeybees in Maryland. The ridiculously small non-nectar producing saplings planted in their place mostly died and have yet to be replaced with living trees. How many decades would it take a black locust sapling to grow into the nectar source that was removed? 20 years? 40 years? More importantly, as best the beekeeper could tell, the saplings (before they died, and have yet to be replaced) looked like maple trees - a very poor substitute for the black locust that were destroyed. A vital, lush nectar source for this beekeeper has been replaced with a food-desert for his now barely surviving colonies. It is important to realize that this single example is repeated many many times as Maryland developers remove essential, established, native, forage necessary for the survival of bees and the survival of beekeeping in Maryland.

If enacted, HB 991 will codify practices that result in greater forest loss during development without providing an effective preservation benefit. This bill is premature and should be held by the Committee until the forest mitigation study directed by the General Assembly via SB 729 of 2019 is complete.

CMBA urges you to accept additional amendments on HB991 - Natural Resources - Forest Mitigation Banks - Qualified Preservation, sponsored by Delegate Gilchrist. We are favorable to this bill **only** if the following amendments are accepted:

1. *Require the completion of the Hughes Center Study by December 1, 2021.*
2. *Sunset the legislation July 1, 2022. This will allow the General Assembly to revisit this topic with the results of the Study in the 2022 Session.*

If the bill is passed out of Committee without these amendments, our posture will be in opposition to this bill.

Central Maryland Beekeepers Association respectfully requests an UNFAVORABLE report from this Committee on HB 991.

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