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Ways and Means Committee
Chair, Revenues Subcommittee



The Maryland House of Delegates
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SPONSOR Testimony: House Bill 92

Madame Chair, Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee,

In 1962, a Maryland resident named Rachel Carson published a book called *Silent Spring*. That book detailed, in powerful language, the impact of pesticides like DDT on the environment. And it is credited, in part, with sparking the environmental movements. This book was titled *Silent Spring* in reference to the lack of birdsong and insect sounds in a world where overuse of DDT and similar chemicals had wiped out animal life. Overuse of pesticides, though, is not the only thing that can silence spring.

The natural world is an extraordinary thing. Nature, over the millenia, created an almost unimaginable variety of plants, animals, and other living things that interact in an astoundingly complex, interdependent tapestry. That interdependence, though, means that if we as humans pull one thread on the tapestry, disrupt one part of the web of life, it will inevitably impact others.

This is the case with the replacement of native species by non-native and invasive species, both plant and animal. Over the centuries, human beings have introduced a huge number of non-native and invasive species to Maryland. As these species have displaced native species, they have increasingly disrupted the natural world. And, like it or not, this has impacted the human world in turn, because we are a part of the tapestry as well.

My home is surrounded by the woods just up the hill from the Patuxent River. My entire front yard is forested. But I rarely see any animal life there. Few birds. Few insects. Few mammals. When I first moved here I was puzzled as to why. But as the growing season continued in that first year, I understood. You see, the entire understory of my front yard consisted of non-native and invasive species. Japanese Stiltgrass. Garlic Mustard. Japanese Barberry. Plants that native species of animals cannot live on. Plants that had created what was for all intents and purposes an ecological desert.

And what's shocking is that we, as a society, keep putting these non-native and invasive species in the ground. This is part of the reason native pollinator populations aren't as robust as they once were, threatening agriculture. It's part of the reason wildlife populations aren't as strong as they might otherwise be. And while this is grim, it is solvable.

We can simply stop planting these species, and intentionally try to plant more native species. That's what this bill is intended to do, at least for taxpayer-funded projects. It is premised on the idea that taxpayer dollars should not be used to harm our environment by planting non-native and invasive species. It bars state tax dollars from being used to plant invasives. And it requires that those tax dollars be used to plant non-natives if and only if native plants can't do the job required. It does not create a new bureaucracy, but instead uses an existing process to pursue this goal, the process of project approval through the Board of Public Works.

We have worked extensively with state agencies for the past 6 months to try to address any concerns they may have. Much of the language of the bill has resulted from those conversations. I am hopeful that what we have produced is a moderate bill, the result of reasonable compromises, and that the affected agencies will join us in advocating for the protection of Maryland's environment. I look forward to working with the Committee to address any concerns or questions about the bill. And I urge the Committee to give it a favorable report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Eric Luedtke".

Delegate Eric Luedtke