



Maryland Native Plant Society

P.O. Box 4877, Silver Spring, MD 20914 • www.mdflora.org

Appreciation • Education • Conservation

Testimony: SB7 & HB15 Invasive and Native Plants – Classification, Listing, Use, and Sales and Use Tax

Position: Favorable

Committee: Budget and Taxation Committee and Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee

Hearing Date: January 25, 2022

The Maryland Native Plant Society (MNPS) is a non-profit organization established in 1972 to ***promote awareness, appreciation, and conservation of Maryland's native plants and their habitats***. MNPS pursues its mission through education, research, advocacy, and service activities. The society has 1,700 members and an additional 3,500 non-member supporters of programs, field trips, and conferences. There is a high degree of interest in protecting and conserving Maryland's native flora and fauna—which are interdependent—and threatened by habitat destruction, invasive species, and climate change.

The MNPS supports SB7 and HB15 with the following comments:

1. The use of the **Plant Invaders of Mid-Atlantic Natural Areas** book (National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 5th ed., 2017) as the source for the invasive plant species to be classified as Tier 1 or Tier 2 Invasive Plants is a reasonable approach. The 80 species featured in the book—which is intended for public education and awareness—were chosen for their documented invasiveness in natural areas as reported by well-known, respected, published experts. These species represent about one-sixth of the total number of documented invasive plants in the mid-Atlantic region, according to the Mid-Atlantic Invaders Tool (invasive.org/midatlantic), which includes only species that can be referenced by reputable sources.
2. The process of assessing invasive species using the USDA's Weed Risk Assessment protocol, is intensive, time-consuming and expensive. A single species assessment can take 120 or more hours. **It is imperative that the state approve sufficient funding to cover the cost of assessments for the additional species to be evaluated and that a timeline of 3 years for completion of these assessments be established as part of this legislation.**
3. Most of the invasive plants impacting natural areas in the United States and Maryland were introduced for ornamental purposes, and many are still grown by the nursery trade and available for purchase.
4. Requiring the Maryland DNR to create and publish a list of Maryland native plant species on the DNR website is an excellent idea. An up-to-date list of native plant species (and

non-native and invasive species) is available through the **Maryland Plant Atlas** and the **Maryland Biodiversity Project**.

5. MNPS strongly supports the requirement that state funds may not be used to purchase or plant an invasive plant species for an outdoor project except where absolutely necessary, like turf on ball fields. This is a crucial step in reducing the number of problematic pest plants that continue to be planted in parks, gardens, and other areas. **Invasive plants will spread beyond plantings into natural areas** and, possibly more importantly, their use **sends the wrong message to the public**.
6. Requiring state agencies and other entities that receive state funding to use Maryland native plants for all planting projects is an excellent idea. The MNPS suggests that native plants be further defined to include **local ecotypes** adapted to **Maryland's ecoregions**. Requiring that locally native plant species be grown and used in plantings will help ensure the preservation of the critical **genetic identity** and diversity of Maryland's native plant species. Including a reasonable timeframe of 3-5 years for accomplishing this goal is recommended.

Respectfully,

Jil Swearingen
Board Member
Maryland Native Plant Society