

SENATOR SARAH ELFRETH
Legislative District 30
Anne Arundel County

Budget and Taxation Committee

Subcommittees

Education, Business and Administration

Chair, Pensions

Senate Chair

Joint Committee on Administrative,
Executive, and Legislative Review

Joint Committee on the Chesapeake and
Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area



James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 103
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3578 · 301-858-3578
800-492-7122 Ext. 3578
Fax 410-841-3156 · 301-858-3156
Sarah.Elfreth@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

January 25, 2022

Testimony in Favor of SB0007
Invasive and Native Plants - Classification, Listing, Use and Sales and Use Tax

Chair Pinsky, Vice-Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee,

I respectfully request a favorable report of Senate Bill 7 to help combat the ever-increasing threat that invasive plants pose to our State's biodiversity and environmental health.

The impacts of invasive plants are clear – they degrade wildlife habitat and water quality, lead to increased soil erosion, strangle native plants, and pose significant challenges to agriculture and recreation opportunities. Additionally, the very nature of invasive plants denotes that, without interventions, they will continue to spread at an exponential rate and continue to disrupt the tightly knit ecosystems present in Maryland.

This legislation will address the threat that invasives pose by:

1. Requiring MDA to classify all plants included in the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Plant Invaders of the Mid-Atlantic as either a Tier 1 or Tier 2 invasive plant in Maryland;
2. Requiring the Department of Natural Resources to create, maintain, and publish on its website a list of plant species native to the State and require this list to also include native plant alternatives to Tier 2 invasives;
3. Ensuring that priority is given to native plants on planting projects undertaken by State Agencies or in projects that receive State support; and,
4. Eliminating the Sales and Use Tax on the sale of plants native to the State.

Current law outlines the process that MDA uses to classify plants as Tier 1 or Tier 2 through the Invasive Plant Advisory Committee (IPAC). While MDA and IPAC have done important work on making determinations on invasives, we believe that it is important to use the US Fish and Wildlife Service's report to ensure that we are weighing all plant species that have been determined as invasive in the Mid Atlantic region.

This Committee also passed legislation last session to ensure that the State does not plant or purchase invasive species on outdoor projects – and this legislation takes that one step further by requiring the prioritization of native plant species on State or State-supported projects.

The need for this legislation is clear: drive anywhere in Maryland and see English ivy strangling Maryland's native oak trees. Visit any farm and hear how much extra work invasives cause and how many precious acres invasives disturb. According to US Fish and Wildlife: "Invasive species have contributed to the decline of 42% of U.S. endangered and threatened species, and for 18% of U.S. endangered or threatened species, invasives are the main cause of their decline."

The time to act is now. Once again I respect a favorable report on SB7 to ensure that Maryland has all the tools necessary to fight invasive plants.