

Testimony: SB0007 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

As a follow up to the successful 2021 bill, HB92 Procurement – Invasive Plant Species – Prohibition on Use of State Funds, this bill expands the list of invasive plants that are regulated and adds a list of native plants that can serve as substitutes.

Our ecosystems don't adapt to invasive plants. When a species is introduced into our country many believe that in time it will be adopted into the native ecosystem and serve functions that native plants do. However, this is not true. In fact many birds, mammals and especially insects are very specific on what they will eat as a food source. Even in hundreds of years this might not change. With this advantage, introduced plants grow quickly in their new environment and crowd out the native plants. Therefore, an introduced plant may become invasive in the wild when it grows faster and uses up the resources that native plants need to thrive. This can result in a loss of species, including pollinators, and overall biodiversity.

Native plants support biodiversity. The World Health Organization has identified the loss of biodiversity as one of the main threats to human health.¹ Native plants have been shown to increase diversity of wildlife because they sustain healthy ecosystems. Native plants are the food source for native insects, birds, and mammals, and when they thrive, we thrive. President Biden's 30x30 national goal to preserve at least 30 percent of U.S. lands by 2030 was initiated with the goal of saving biodiversity. This initiative will be enhanced by the use of native plants.

The demand for native plants creates opportunity. With the increased demand for native plants, nurseries and growers can respond to a reliable market demand and benefit economically. Native plants typically sell for higher prices than non-native plants and this specialty market can become a successful opportunity for local businesses.

The State of Maryland can and should support biodiversity and human health, by decreasing the use and sale of invasive plants, while encouraging native plants instead. We are asking for a favorable report on SB0007.

¹ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/biodiversity-and-health>

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