



January 24, 2022

Audubon Society of Central Maryland
P.O. Box 660
Mount Airy, MD 21771

Dear Maryland Delegates:

The Audubon Society of Central Maryland is a 501 c 3 organization, with a mission to protect and restore birds, other wildlife, and their habitats, through stewardship, education, and advocacy, for the benefit of people and the earth. A chapter of the National Audubon Society, our territory includes Carroll, Frederick, Howard, and Montgomery counties, and we own two wildlife sanctuaries, in Mt. Airy and New Market. Those properties are havens for wildlife and people because they are managed to protect and restore native biodiversity.

We are testifying in support of HB15, Invasive and Native Plants – Classification, Listing, Use, and Sales and Use Tax. This commonsense bill would classify well-known invasive plants according to level of potential harm and facilitate alternative planting of native species that would instead benefit Maryland wildlife, watersheds, and ecosystems. Informed by scientific research, our Audubon members know that native birds, mammals, amphibians, and other wildlife that live in or migrate through local ecological communities depend on the plants that evolved with them in Central Maryland. Further, as a land-based, all-volunteer organization, we know the economic and labor costs involved in removing invasive plants such as Oriental bittersweet, autumn olive, and Ailanthus trees in our efforts to protect and restore our property for its intended use as a beautiful refuge for wildlife and people. This bill would not only reduce our risk and expense from additional aggressive plant invasions from neighboring properties, but would enhance the overall quality of wildlife habitat in our chapter territory and state.

Best known as a bird conservation organization, Audubon takes seriously a responsibility to contribute to landscape regeneration through native plantings. Our volunteers have planted warm season grasses to support native grassland birds, milkweed and nectar plants for monarch butterflies, and countless trees that will support the leaf-eating caterpillars that 96% of terrestrial songbirds depend upon to raise their young. As University of Delaware entomologist Doug Tallamy has shown, it takes 6,000 to 9,000 caterpillars to raise one family of chickadees. These beloved birds, and many others, are declining because instead of caterpillar-rich native trees like oaks and black cherries, our farm edges, backyards, parklands, and neighborhood open spaces have been taken over by non-native plants such as Bradford pear and Princess Pawlonia trees. If we want chickadees at our feeders, orioles in our parks, and



hawks overhead, we need legislation like HB15 that supports the replacement of invasive plant installations with species that have evolved to be part of our Maryland landscapes.

Our Audubon wildlife sanctuaries can't function as isolated islands. We need functioning landscapes that support healthy ecosystems throughout our beautiful state. HB15 would help free us from a bad, outmoded habits and would follow more current scientific understanding of the vital role native plants play in keeping our environment healthy for all. Recent social research has also confirmed that diverse bird communities lead to happier human communities; quality of life for people and nature starts with healthy native plants. The Audubon Society of Central Maryland strongly urges the Maryland legislature to support HB15 to benefit wildlife, native ecosystems, and everyone who depends upon them.

Thank you and best wishes,
Julie Dunlap, PhD
Education Chair
Audubon Society of Central Maryland