



January 24, 2022

Invasive and Native Plants - Classification, Listing, Use, and Sales and Use Tax (HB0015)
Position: FAVORABLE

Dear Chairperson Atterbeary and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

Blue Water Baltimore's mission is to restore the quality of Baltimore's rivers, streams and Harbor to foster a healthy environment, a strong economy, and thriving communities. A core part of our work is operating the Herring Run Nursery, which specializes in plants native to Maryland and the Chesapeake Bay watershed. **We write today in support of the Invasive and Native Plants - Classification, Listing, Use, and Sales and Use Tax (HB0015).**

Our non-profit Nursery offers more than 250 native species of trees, shrubs, vines, flowers, and more to retail and wholesale customers alike. Native plants offer a multitude of benefits. They help reduce stormwater pollution entering the Chesapeake Bay by reducing nutrient runoff and requiring less chemical inputs than non-native plants. Native plants have deeper root systems than non-natives and are better at stabilizing soils and preventing sediment runoff. They also provide critical habitat and food for butterflies, birds, and pollinators. Ecosystem health is increasingly important with rising concerns over climate change and declining pollinator populations, and native plants are an integral part of a healthy and functioning ecosystem.

HB0015 will support the growth of native plants in Maryland by providing clear classifications of invasive and native plants; requiring the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to develop and maintain a public list of Maryland's native plants on its website with information about native plants that can be planted as alternatives to invasive plants; requiring state agencies and state-funded projects to prioritize native plants for all planting projects; and exempting native plant sales from Maryland's sales tax.

Our nursery staff is responsible for engaging and educating Baltimore communities about the many benefits and uses of native plants. We promote opportunities for Green Stormwater Infrastructure and conservation landscaping whenever possible. Our team also develops landscape designs and provides plant material for community and residential projects that create harmony between aesthetic preferences and ecosystem benefits. A list of native plants provided by DNR will be beneficial to our organization because there is often confusion about whether a plant is native or not depending on the source of information. Additionally, removing sales tax on native plants will benefit our customers and encourage more people to choose natives.

We urge a favorable report on HB0015.

Sincerely,

Rob Jenkins
Herring Run Nursery Manager

Mary Lewis
Herring Run Nursery Assistant Manager