

Chesapeake Watershed Restoration Professionals

January 26, 2022

Hon. Vanessa Atterbeary
Chair, Environment and Transportation
Room 131
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Chairman Atterbeary, Vice-Chair Washington and members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Chesapeake Watershed Restoration Professionals (CWRP), we strongly support HB 15 – Invasive and Native Plants – Classification, Listing, Use, and Sales and Use Tax. CWRP was founded in November of 2020 and represents Maryland professionals whose daily work improves the health of Maryland's waters and our prized Chesapeake Bay. We thank Delegate Luedtke for leading the charge on this important issue.

This bill requires the Department of Agriculture (MDA) to classify approximately 75 invasive species, as identified by the National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, as either tier 1 or tier 2 invasive plants. Additionally, the bill would require MDA to publish native plants that could be used in lieu of a tier 2 invasive species.

The problem of invasive plant species is not unique to Maryland. However, Maryland is unique in that it is the home of the Chesapeake Bay. Improving the health quality of the Bay is critical and invasive plant species play a critical role in meeting that objective. Once an invasive plant species is planted, it is often impossible to eradicate, usually at the expense of native plants. House Bill 15 is a small, but important, step toward changing behavior. In addition to listing suitable tier 2 replacement plants, exempting the sales and use tax on native plants will significantly incentivize the use of native plants.

We thank the committee for their consideration of this important legislation and the issues we have raised. We look forward to working with you in the coming years to strengthen Maryland's environmental laws.

Sincerely,

Liam O'Meara
President
Chesapeake Watershed Restoration Professionals