

SB836_Favorable_WildOnesGreaterBaltimore_A_Wray.pd

Uploaded by: Amanda Wray

Position: FAV



POSITION: **FAVORABLE**

Maryland Native Plants Program, SB 836
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee, March 2, 2023
Testimony of Amanda Wray, WildOnes Greater Baltimore

Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and Honorable Members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee,

I am submitting this testimony as president of WildOnes Greater Baltimore. We are part of the national group, WildOnes, which has supported native plant landscaping education for its members throughout the country for more than 30 years. We strongly SUPPORT this bill to support native plant labeling to make it easier for nursery customers to locate and purchase beneficial native plants for their gardens.

Research has shown that restoring native plants to our landscapes to promote biodiversity helps native wildlife to survive [see reference to PNAS below]. Sadly, much of our urban landscapes now consist of non-native/exotic plants—many of which have escaped into the wild to become invasive. Gardeners are at the mercy of what their local garden center provides, and typically have to hunt for the few straight species (naturally occurring) native plant selections available. Customers are often directed to non-native choices by nursery staff. Retail inventory is often scattered amongst branded non-natives, without a dedicated section, and staff may have little knowledge of natives. I recently spoke with a staff member of my local nursery who was not able to demonstrate basic knowledge of native plants, and indicated he often recommended certain invasive plants because he did not know what native plants to recommend instead. He said he would like to have this information.

Commercially branded names like “Proven Winners” are designed to attract the attention of customers with appealing colors and imagery on their tags and pots, in this case, these tags create an increase in sales by 5 to 1 [see Effects of Labeling reference below]. These tags on non-native varieties of plants lure customers into a purchase that may appear to be beneficial.

In actuality, the real “proven winner” is a locally grown native plant that has already proven itself by having evolved for millennia to be perfectly adapted for our local conditions. This means that it will do well for the gardener, while also helping the ecosystem survive in our critically important Chesapeake Bay Watershed region. Gardens centers can also be more confident in ordering more native plants if they see a similar uptick in purchases from native plants with more eye-catching tags, stickers or branded pots.

Native plants provide an ecologically important role of supporting native insects, which provide an essential food source to birds and, in turn, larger fauna. Non-native plants cannot support the growth and development of native insect populations in the same way as natives that provide habitat, sustenance and support to the very ecosystems we rely on for our own survival. Gardeners are inadvertently damaging their own ecosystems via purchases made at nurseries they are trusting to sell them beneficial plants.

When I was trimming seed heads from a highly invasive Chinese Fountaingrass plant on my nextdoor neighbor's property (with his permission), another neighbor came by and asked me a very pertinent question: "If these plants are invasive, why are the nurseries selling them to us"? This is a larger question for another time. For the purposes of this legislation, if we could just give our beneficial native plants more visibility on the shelves so they are easier to find, we could go a long way to helping our ecosystems recover from the many years of destruction we have thrust upon it.

We ask for a FAVORABLE report for SB836/HB950, which will bring attention to straight species native plants that are so essential for keeping our ecosystems functional and robust. The more native plants we can restore to our local backyards and larger landscapes, will help sustain wildlife that ranges throughout the critically important Chesapeake Bay Watershed region.

Resources for further reading:

Effects of Labeling: "Recent consumer research shows that gardeners choose Proven Winners® at a rate of 5-to-1 when sold in the white branded containers, with accompanying P.O.P display." and "On a retail sales level, Proven Winners and Proven Selections sales are greater than a half-billion dollars annually."

SOURCES: <https://pwfourstar.com/retailers> and https://www.provenwinners.com/Professionals/Complete_Package and <https://www.provenwinners.com/why-proven-winners/company-background>

Benefits of Native Plants: "Properties landscaped with nonnative plants function as population sinks for insectivorous birds. To promote sustainable food webs, urban planners and private landowners should prioritize native plant species." SOURCE: <https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.1809259115>

Amanda Wray, President
WildOnes Greater Baltimore
8308 Thornton Road
Towson, MD 21204

SB836_ MDSierraClub_fav 2March23.pdf

Uploaded by: Carolyn Parsa

Position: FAV



P.O. Box 278
Riverdale, MD 20738

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment
Testimony on: SB836 – Maryland Native Plants Program
Position: Support
Hearing Date: March 2, 2023

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club supports SB836, Maryland Native Plants Program. The bill will help to educate growers, retailers, and consumers about vitally important Maryland grown native plants and it will help Maryland businesses gain market share in this fast growing plant category. It will also support consumers with clear and helpful information they are seeking from planning though purchase.

Native plants are the keystone food for much of our wildlife, including existentially important native pollinators. Of the 100 crop species that supply 90% of human nutrition, over 70 require bee pollination.¹ Many of our important crops rely on **native** bees, including squash, pumpkins, tomatoes, blueberries, cranberries, and sunflowers, to name a few. According to the United States Geological Survey (USGS), in almost all crops, native bees are the primary pollinator or they significantly supplement the activity of European honeybees. Even crops like cotton, soybeans, and peppers that do not need a pollinator have a higher yield if visited by bees.² Native pollinators are critical to sustain food production for people and for wildlife that supports the food web. When we plant native plants, we are helping sustain our native pollinators.

In addition, 75% of all North American plant species require an insect, frequently bees, to pollinate them and allow that plant to reproduce.³ Without critical pollinators, these plants die out. Imagine our world without three quarters of our plants.

Most of our native pollinators and other wildlife have coevolved to need native plants. Between 20%-45% of native bees require specific native plants.⁴ Many people are now aware that without milkweed, Monarch butterflies will not reproduce. These once abundant, iconic butterflies are now endangered with extinction. This same story exists for countless species throughout the plant and animal kingdom, many of which are keystone species in the food web on which we depend.

While the decline of wildlife species is complex, in many cases it comes down to not having the food they need in the form of a native tree or other native plant. Over centuries, we have removed native trees and other plants and put non-native and sometimes even invasive plants in their place. While these plants may have appealing attributes, too frequently they do not support our Maryland wildlife, including our vitally important pollinators.

In addition, to helping sustain our biodiversity, native plants also help our watershed. Native plants, frequently deep rooted, help with storm water management, sediment control, and Bay health. For too long they have been under appreciated by too many. However, many Americans are now gaining an understanding about the connection between native plants and our wildlife. Over 67 million Americans reported buying a plant to benefit our bees, butterflies, or birds.⁵

Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America's oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.

Marylanders, like other Americans, want to help, but consumers need better information both when they are planning their garden and at point of purchase about what is native to where they live and what will grow best in their setting.

This voluntary program will provide important information to consumers to help them choose the right native plant that will grow best here and support our wildlife. It will also help develop the small, but growing, Maryland native-plant grower and retail business sector. This program is good for the environment, helps to build Maryland-grown products to address a growing consumer market opportunity, and helps support consumer interest in these essential plants.

For the reasons provided, we respectfully request a favorable report on SB 836.

Marie LaPorte
Natural Places Chair
Greater Baltimore Group of Sierra Club
Marielaporte@verizon.net

Josh Tulkin
Chapter Director
Josh.Tulkin@MDSierra.org

¹ Humans Must Change Behaviour to Save Bees, Vital for Food Production, March 10, 2011, *United Nations UN News*, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2011/03/368622>

² USGS, <https://www.usgs.gov/faqs/what-role-native-bees-united-states>

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ordóñez-Lancet, Jessica, “50% increase in People Planting for Wildlife” *The National Wildlife Federation*, May 6, 2021 (<https://www.nwf.org/Latest-News/Press-Releases/2021/05-06-21-Garden-for-Wildlife-Month-2021>)

SB 836_CBF_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Doug Myers

Position: FAV



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

*Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education*

Senate Bill 836

Maryland Native Plants Program

Date: March 2, 2023	Position: Support
To: Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee	From: Doug Myers, MD Senior Scientist

Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS** SB 836 which promotes the sale of native plants and increases education about and marketing and promotion of native plants throughout the state.

Native plants of Maryland are not only beautiful and diverse, but provide a host of other ecological services from support of pollinators, improvement of soil health, fish and wildlife habitats and resilience to climate change. From the water quality perspective, native plants and their adaptations to Maryland's weather patterns are better at absorbing excessive rainfall volumes and storing water underground for eventual release to surface streams than non-native plants. We call this the "green sponge" effect of our landscape. Use of native plants in urban settings can be even more important as they provide cooling shade and treatment of polluted runoff as well as a sense of connection to the natural world. Ecological science supports the maintenance of native plant cover as the best defense against the establishment of invasive species, especially along shorelines and wetlands throughout the Bay watershed.

SB 836 could shift the paradigm in the nursery industry from focusing only on plants that look pretty, to those that function in extending nature to every back yard. Wisely, the bill also creates a position within the Maryland Extension Service to specifically provide information on native plants. Extension is a trusted provider of plant information throughout the state. The position will go a long way in helping residents, businesses and the public to embrace a more resilient environment dominated by native plants and animals.

CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report on SB 836.

For more information, please contact Matt Stegman, Maryland Staff Attorney, at mstegman@cbf.org.

Maryland Office • Philip Merrill Environmental Center • 6 Herndon Avenue • Annapolis • Maryland • 21403

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. With over 300,000 members and e-subscribers, including over 109,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.

Arundel Rivers Testimony FAV SB836. Native plants

Uploaded by: Elle Bassett

Position: FAV



PO Box 760 Edgewater, MD
21037

410-224-3802
www.arundelrivers.org

Testimony encouraging a **SUPPORT** of Senate Bill 836 – Maryland Native Plants Program

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
March 1, 2023

Dear Chairman Feldman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **SUPPORT OF SB836**, on behalf of Arundel Rivers Federation. Arundel Rivers is a non-profit organization dedicated to the protection, preservation, and restoration of the South, West and Rhode Rivers with over 3,500 supporters. Our mission is to work with local communities to achieve clean, fishable, and swimmable waterways for present and future generations.

Senate Bill 836 will create the Maryland Native Plants Program, promoting the use and sale of plants native to Maryland, and provide education and outreach to the public about the benefits of planting native. The program will utilize the expertise of the University of Maryland Extension Office, which already has the existing infrastructure and native-plant programming to successfully implement this program. Additionally, it will create a consumer friendly and voluntary labeling program and logo to identify a plant as a “Maryland Native” on plant tags and at point-of-sale. This will provide consumers with the choice to make more environmentally minded decisions while shopping.

We have seen significant declines in pollinators and other wildlife species, highlighting the need for more native plant species that are critical in the food web and necessary for the survival of pollinator species.¹ Native plant species also provide a benefit to our local water quality. Native plants often have more extensive root systems and require less fertilizer than non-native species, resulting in improved downstream and riparian water quality due to less nutrient loading. Arundel Rivers Federation encourages residents within our watersheds to plant native species through our Bay Loving Landscapes Program. This bill will directly support that program and hopefully result in more native plants being planted.

Arundel Rivers Federation strongly supports making native plant species more accessible to Marylanders to improve habitat and local water quality and we respectfully request a **FAVORABLE REPORT on SB836**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elle Bassett".

Elle Bassett
South, West and Rhode Riverkeeper
Arundel Rivers Federation

¹ Maryland Department of Natural Resources. “What’s the Buzz: All About Pollinators”
<https://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Pages/habitat/wawhatsthebuzz.aspx>

testimony for SB836 (MD Native Plants Program).doc

Uploaded by: Jane Henderson

Position: FAV



9640 Rosaryville Road Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20772
240-338-2579 jane@chesapeakenatives.org
www.chesapeakenatives.org

**Testimony IN FAVOR of SB836
(MD Native Plant Program)
Presented to the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
of the Senate of Maryland
by Jane Henderson, Executive Director of Chesapeake Natives
March 2, 2023**

Chairman Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, members of the Committee,

I am here to offer Chesapeake Natives' strong support for SB836, creating a Maryland Native Plant Program. Chesapeake Natives is a volunteer-driven non-profit whose mission is to propagate, promote and protect native plants of the coastal plains and piedmont that form the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

The creation of a program that clearly identifies straight species of plants native to Maryland, as well as reliable sources to purchase those plants, will greatly help homeowners and landscapers alike make choices that are best for our plant and local ecosystem. Unfortunately, non-native species and cultivar plants are currently too often mislabeled and mislead consumers trying to do their best for biodiversity.

We know that biodiversity is essential to keeping our planet habitable for human beings. The complex, localized food webs that support life on earth are critically stressed as insect populations plummet. Without insects, most flowering plants and birds will go extinct as food webs collapse. As dire, the biosphere will rot without insects decomposing, leaving inhospitable bacteria and fungi to dominate.

Even with increasing calls for land in conservation, just over 85% of land east of the Mississippi is privately owned *so what we do in our yards matters*. By growing natives, planting natives and encouraging others to plant natives – particularly local ecotypes – we directly rebuild the food web, support biodiversity, while sequestering carbon and rebuilding natural habitat.

Audubon too has sounded the alarm: “Most of the landscaping plants available in nurseries are alien species from other countries . . . [that] not only sever the food web, but many have become invasive pests, outcompeting native species and degrading habitat in remaining natural areas.” *The solution: “homeowners, landscapers, and local policymakers can benefit birds and other wildlife by simply selecting native plants.”*¹

¹ See audubon.org/content/why-native-plants-matter

We are most excited about the Maryland Natives marketing program and signs and believe it will be a huge step to inform gardeners and plant consumers about native alternatives. And as a grower of native plants, we look forward to becoming certified as a Maryland Native Plant Grower and Retailer.

As a partner of the Department of Natural Resources in Rosaryville State Park, we have seen firsthand the Department's commitment and knowledge about Maryland natives and are pleased that they will play a role in the Maryland Native Plant Program.

For all these reasons we urge a favorable report on SB836. At the same time, we would like to respectfully *offer friendly amendments*.

At Chesapeake Natives, we grow and distribute to the public almost 200 **local ecotype native species or LENS** at our nursery in Rosaryville State Park in Prince George's County, MD. Local "ecotypes" are plants whose genetic heritage is of local, wild stock. LENS plants have coevolved with local insect populations so they bloom when they are most needed. LENS best contribute to the regionalized biodiversity critical to healthy food webs.

Our amendment is that LENS be identified as a subcategory of "Maryland Natives" – as Maryland natives whose genetic heritage is also from Maryland or at least from the Chesapeake Bay ecoregion. We believe this additional distinction will encourage native growers to pay closer attention to their seed sources and to seek out seed with local provenance. We might also include identification and even mapping of local seed sources as a responsibility for the Native Plant Specialist." I would be happy to work with the sponsor and Committee to create such an amendment.

In closing, I extend an open invitation to members of the Committee to come and visit our local ecotype native plant (LENS) nursery at Mt Airy in beautiful Rosaryville State Park.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

Senate Bill 836 - Maryland Native Plants - Support

Uploaded by: Jen Nelson

Position: FAV



March 2, 2023

The Honorable Brian Feldman, Chairman
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Re: Senate Bill 836 – Maryland Native Plants Program

Position: *Support*

Chairman Feldman & Committee Members:

I am writing on behalf of the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts (MASCD) to express our support for Senate Bill 836 – Maryland Native Plants Program. This bill establishes the Maryland Native Plants Program and encourages retail garden centers and wholesale nurseries to promote the sale of native Maryland plants through coordination efforts with our local University of Maryland Extension offices.

The Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts, incorporated in 1956, promotes practical and effective soil, water, and natural resource related programs to all citizens through individual conservation districts on a voluntary basis through leadership, education, cooperation, and local direction. By supporting this bill, MASCD continues their legacy of supporting statewide conservation efforts.

We respectfully request a favorable report of Senate Bill 836, which shows your dedicated support to the entire State of Maryland and the agricultural community. Thank you for your kind consideration and attention to this legislation.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jen Nelson, Executive Director
Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts

SB836_fav_HSUS.pdf

Uploaded by: Jennifer Bevan-Dangel

Position: FAV



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES**

March 2, 2023

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

SB836

Maryland Native Plants Program

FAVORABLE

The Humane Society of the United States, as well as the Humane Society Wildlife Land Trust, on behalf of our members and supporters in Maryland, urges a favorable report and speedy action on SB836. This bill would encourage the use of native plants throughout the state through education, labelling, and promotion.

Native plants are not only healthier for the environment, but they provide critical habitat and food, for pollinators, birds, and other wildlife. Native species of plants evolved in conjunction with our native insects and birds. They support a variety of native species, while invasives of similar types will support just a few species. And often an invasive species, while it might provide food for pollinators, is less healthy and offers less nutritional value than a native species would.

It is often very difficult for the average gardener to know which plants are truly native, and which are invasive. On a personal note, I have made the mistake of planting butterfly bush, thinking it was beneficial to pollinators, only to later learn that it is invasive in Maryland and does not support native species of butterflies. This program, which would create more robust education and outreach on native plants, would be beneficial to residents who want to do what is best, but often are not sure what plants to use.

Pollinators, native birds, and other wildlife need native, local sources of food and shelter to thrive. We can create micro-habitats in our backyards, with the right tools and knowledge. SB 836 would provide those tools and we urge a favorable report.

Senate Testimony SB836.pdf

Uploaded by: Jennifer Tobian

Position: FAV

March 1, 2023

SB836 Maryland Native Plants Program--FAVORABLE

Sponsor: Sen. Ben Brooks

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee (EEE)

Hearing date and time: March 2, 2023 1:00pm

Dear Honorable Senators,

I am writing my first letter of testimony to the MGA because the Maryland Native Plant Program gives me hope for Maryland's future and preserving our natural heritage in addition to our food supply and biodiversity. As a homeowner in Maryland for over 15 years, I have become frustrated by the lack of information on native plants, and quite honestly, confused about what is best to plant in my yard and where to find it. I have searched several web sites—the Maryland Extension and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources among them—and while there is a plethora of information available at my fingertips, it is not easy to sort through and find suitable plants to buy at my local nurseries. When I find a native plant that I would like to purchase, I often have a hard time finding it at the nurseries near my house. Herring Run Nursery has a lovely selection of native plants, but they do not have a wide selection. Furthermore, other nurseries in my area such as Valley View and Sun Nurseries carry some native plants, but every nursery has their own method to labeling, which makes it quite difficult for consumers to find them easily.

The Maryland Native Plant Program would help by providing an organized list of commercially suitable native plants for homeowners, businesses, schools, and other consumers. Furthermore, organized lists of nurseries that carry a significant array of native plants clearly labeled will make it easier for all Marylanders to plant natives, as we know we should be doing.

Thank you for supporting the Maryland Native Plant Program and all it offers to Maryland.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Tobian

577 Woodbine Ave, Towson, MD 21204

SB836AudubonMidAtlantic_NativePlants.pdf

Uploaded by: Jim Brown

Position: FAV



Maryland Office
Patterson Park Audubon Ctr
2901 E. Baltimore St
Baltimore, MD 21214

March 3, 2023

To: Maryland Senate Committee on Education, Energy and the Environment

From: Jim Brown, Policy Director, Audubon Mid-Atlantic

Subject: Favorable Testimony for Maryland **SB836 Maryland Native Plants Program**

Good afternoon. My name is Jim Brown. I am the policy director for Audubon Mid-Atlantic, here in Maryland. Audubon Mid-Atlantic is the regional office of National Audubon Society, representing over 35,000 Marylanders who advocate for the protection of birds, bird habitat, and policies aiming to protect both birds and human communities in the face of increasing environmental challenges, habitat loss, pollution, and climate change.

Audubon Mid-Atlantic enthusiastically supports the Maryland Native Plants Program. Specifically, SB836 protects birds and it protects our unique landscapes for future generations of Marylanders to benefit from. This bill is good for birds, for people, and for the dynamic ecosystems that make Maryland.

Science tells us birds are in decline due to habitat loss and climate change. 1/3 of eastern forest and grassland bird species experienced significant population declines in the past 50 years. Ruby throated hummingbirds have fewer native plants to sustain themselves. Iconic birds such as – the Wood Thrush, American Kestrel, Brown Thrasher, Prairie Warbler, Eastern Meadowlark and Baltimore Oriole which are in decline across Maryland will benefit from this bill. SB836 will slow and reverse this trend by encouraging voluntary measures to label native plants at nurseries, certify native plant retailers, and promote the value of native plants in Maryland’s landscapes through education and outreach.

SB836 is not just for the birds. When native plants are a dominant factor in the landscape all wildlife benefits. Pollinators thrive, beneficial seeds are dispersed, pests are kept in check, and human communities benefit. Native forests, meadows and gardens support local economies throughout the state through ecosystem services, green job training, tourism, and associated industries. Promoting native plants in Maryland is also an investment in a future defined by climate change. We know that forests, grasslands, wetlands, and coastal marshes, and gardens comprising native plants sequester carbon, slow flooding, filter water, and buffer vulnerable communities from increasing risks of climate change related storm events and sea level rise.

The Science tells us:

- Invasive and exotic plant species provide minimal ecosystem services to birds and other wildlife
- Maryland’s unique landscapes and birds are under threat from non-native plants

- Promoting native plants in Maryland's landscapes is a critical step to protecting our state's biodiversity, protecting bird habitat, and keeping Maryland resilient in the face of changing climate

SB836 will protect birds and bird habitat, create a more resilient environment, and support the local Maryland nursery economy. It will also continue to hold Maryland up as a leader in habitat conservation, ecosystem preservation, and the protection of birds now and into the future.

Audubon Mid-Atlantic respectfully urges a favorable review of this legislation.

Thank You,

Jim Brown

Policy Director
Audubon Mid-Atlantic
410-207-2445
Jim.brown@audubon.org

SB 836 Testimony - IPC.pdf

Uploaded by: Jodi Rose

Position: FAV



Forming Faithful Stewards,
Caring for Sacred Waters

PO Box 6791
Annapolis, MD 21401

**Maryland Native Plants Program
Senate Bill 836
FAVORABLE**

March 1, 2023

The Honorable Brian Feldman
Chair, Ed., Energy, Env. Committee
Maryland Senate
2 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Cheryl Kagan
Vice Chair, Ed., Energy, Env. Committee
Maryland Senate
2 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

On behalf of Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake, I write to urge your support for the Maryland Native Plants Program (SB 836) to advance this bill favorably from committee.

We enthusiastically support this program to increase awareness around and practice of planting native species. As you know, planting native species is critical to ensuring a vibrant and resilient ecosystem. Natives can withstand the pressures of drought, heat, and insects common in our Maryland hardiness zone. This means they need less human maintenance – less watering, less pesticides, and promote food and pollen sources for native insects and animals. **If there's one thing we can all do to create climate-resilient yards, it's plant *only* native species.**

In our work with faith-based congregations, we have observed first-hand how many well-intentioned people do not fully understand the importance of native plantings, where to find them, and how to not accidentally purchase non-natives. Even we at IPC are not experts – a recent online blog we posted accidentally depicted a non-native plant. **One thing we love about this bill is that it will create simple lists, labels, and other tools to help consumers clearly recognize natives,** stay away from non-natives, and help acquire new knowledge so that it become second-nature over time.

We also are aware that in some parts of the state it is difficult to find nurseries that sell more than just a few native species. Increased awareness among consumers would hopefully increase demand for these products, which opens up market-driven opportunities for retailers.

Our network of congregations is deeply committed to earth-centered initiatives and educating their members how to live in harmony within the ecosystem of which we humans are just one part. **Senate Bill 836 reinforces the importance of being mindful of our gardening choices and**

living with grace in this ecosystem we all share with one another and other species. We hope you will look favorably upon this bill and support its advancement.

Sincerely,


Jodi Rose
Executive Director

MNPS Written Testimony for Maryland Native Plants

Uploaded by: Judith Fulton

Position: FAV



Maryland Native Plant Society

APPRECIATION CONSERVATION EDUCATION

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Testimony for SB0836: “Maryland Native Plants Program”

Sponsor: Senator Brooks

Position: Support

Hearing Date: March 2, 2023

The Maryland Native Plant Society (MNPS) strongly supports Senate Bill 836 because of its importance to the continued existence of native plants, native animals, healthy environments, and human beings.

MNPS is a 501(c)(3) non-profit with over two thousand very active members, making a difference in Maryland for 30 years. We hold annual meetings throughout the State, from Talbot and Cecil Counties to Alleghany and Prince George’s Counties. Our mission is to promote awareness, appreciation, and conservation of Maryland’s native plants and their habitats. We pursue our mission through education, research, advocacy, and service activities. I am Vice President of MNPS, a Board Director for the Mid-Atlantic Invasive Plant Council, and the founder of EcoPlant Consulting, which specializes in native plants, invasive plants, and ecology. I co-authored *Plant-Invaders of Mid-Atlantic Natural Areas, Field Guide*, printed in October 2022 with over 20,000 pre-orders.

SB0836 is an excellent bill that combines voluntary participation with public education and business promotion. Native plant growers and retailers can experience revenue growth, while homeowners and landscapers can access more of the native plants that they want. The University of Maryland Extension has reported that interest in native plants has been increasing significantly across the board. For example, the most visited webpage in 2022 was *Recommended Native Plants for Maryland*, with unique page views increasing over 90% from 2021 to 2022.

Native plants are at the base of the food web, and people are at the top. If we don’t encourage growing native plants, most of our pollinators and other beneficial insects will die off, and only wind-pollinated crops will persist. Over 95% of U.S. land birds feed their nestlings on native caterpillars and other insects. When birds migrate or overwinter, they depend on the nutrition and fats in native berries. Recent scientific studies show birds who eat berries from alien plants are less healthy. Without native insects and fruits, the skies will become silent. Without native plants and the rest of the complex interrelated food web, humans might not be able to survive.

Loss of biodiversity is as much a threat to our existence as climate change. According to a 2023 report by NatureServe's scientists, one third of the U.S.'s plant species may go extinct. Healthy habitats require a lot of diversity to sustain themselves, but over 40% of U.S. ecosystems are at risk of collapse.

Due to extensive development and farming, wild areas have been disappearing. Native plants are becoming more dependent on cultivated landscapes to survive. With this proposed legislation, the Commercial Maryland Native Plant List will provide a much needed resource. We will know what species can best help Maryland's environment, and they will become more widely available.

If we plant genetically diverse Maryland natives, they can cross pollinate with their wild siblings. Consequently, species will be healthier and more resilient in the face of climate change. The plants will be better able to adapt to temperature extremes, flooding and drought. In contrast, plant populations that are too small or not genetically diverse can result in die-offs, similar to what occurred during the Irish potato famine. Just like when small human populations interbreed, diseases could cause major plant problems.

It's time for us to use more native plants—to take small actions that combine to make a big difference. We need to grow native plants so that the food web can survive. The Maryland Native Plant Society respectfully urges a favorable report on SB0836.

Judy Fulton
Vice President
Maryland Native Plant Society
Jfulton5@gmail.com

References:

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SB836_GreenTowsonAlliance_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Kirsten Hoffman

Position: FAV



February 28, 2023

Testimony SB836 Maryland Native Plants Program - FAVORABLE

Kirsten Hoffman for the Green Towson Alliance

Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and Honorable Members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee,

The Green Towson Alliance writes in support of the passage of SB836 Maryland Native Plants Program. The Green Towson Alliance is a coalition of environmentalists who advocate for a greener, healthier, more sustainable community in Baltimore County.

Biodiversity, the variety of animals, plants, fungi, and microorganisms that make up our natural world, supports everything in nature that we need to survive: food, clean water, medicine, and shelter. Biodiversity loss is often cited as the biggest existential threat facing our world today. By a simple act, however, each of us can help mitigate this threat. That simple act is adding native plants to our landscapes. Through planting natives, we can start to provide much needed habitat and start to reconnect fragmented habitats benefiting the pollinators and wildlife that make our lives possible.

Consumer demand for native plants is increasing as more and more people hear the message of all the benefits native plants provide. The University of Maryland Extension recently reported that its most visited webpage in 2022 was “Recommended Native Plants for Maryland”. A 2021 survey by the National Wildlife Federation in partnership with the National Gardening Association found that 1 in 3 U.S. adults purchased a plant to help wildlife and 1 in 4 are specifically looking to purchase native plants, a 26% and 17% increase over 2020 respectively.

As consumers, how do we know which plants are Maryland natives? How do we identify Maryland native plants when we go to a nursery? How do we find nurseries that carry a wide choice of native plants?

This bill seeks to address those issues. It establishes a list of commercially available Maryland native plants that both consumers and the nursery trade can reference on state websites. The bill creates a “Maryland Natives” logo which can be used by nurseries both at the point-of-sale and on their websites to label Maryland native plants found on the commercial plant list. The bill also creates a voluntary certification program for native plant growers and retailers who choose to sell a significant amount of native plants.

When you start to understand what native plants provide for us, it is no wonder that more and more consumers are asking for them. Native plants support our pollinators (bees, butterflies, insects) which in turn support bird and wildlife populations. They help reduce stormwater runoff to keep the Bay cleaner, and, once established, require less irrigation, fertilizer and maintenance than lawns and non-native ornamentals.

“Native plants are the most powerful tool in our conservation toolbox.” according to Dr. Doug Tallamy of the University of Delaware. “Without increasing their use and protection, we will fail in our conservation efforts.”

Please give a favorable report on SB836 to support our Maryland consumers, Maryland plant nurseries and Maryland pollinators and wildlife.

Respectfully,

Kirsten Hoffman

for the Green Towson Alliance

701 West Joppa Road

Towson, MD 21204

We have received wide support for this bill across environmental groups, plant nurseries, garden clubs and ordinary gardeners. Some of the supporters include:

Sierra Club

Audubon Mid-Atlantic

Maryland Native Plant Society

Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake

Maryland Ornithological Society

Safe Skies Maryland

Horticultural Society of Maryland

Wild Ones

Blue Water Baltimore

Green Towson Alliance

Garden Club of Chevy Chase

Catonsville Garden Club

Green Spring Valley Club

Bona Terra

Izel Native Plants

Lauren's Garden Service

Archewild

Earth Sangha

Unity Church Hill Nursery

Hardy Garden Club

Georgetown Garden Club

The Trowel Garden Club

Amateur Gardeners Club

Halten Garden Club

Talbot Garden Club

Guilford Garden Club

SB836 Maryland Native Plant Program Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Lauren Hubbard

Position: FAV

SB836 Maryland Native Plant Program - FAVORABLE

Name: Lauren Hubbard, Ph.D.

Address: 17817 Hollingsworth Drive, Derwood, MD 20855

In support of: Maryland Native Plants Program

SB836 Committee: Education, Energy and the Environment

Hearing Date: March 2nd, 2023

My name is Lauren Hubbard, I reside in Montgomery County, Maryland. I hold a doctorate in plant developmental genetics and am a certified Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professional. I'm also a volunteer weed warrior supervisor and master gardener. I own a landscape design/consulting business and operate a small native plant nursery. I am testifying in support of the Maryland Native Plants Program.

In working with the public both professionally and as a volunteer, I have found that knowledge about and access to native plants is a significant hurdle for many professional landscapers and home gardeners who are interested in ecological landscaping. While the availability of native plants for use in the landscaping business has been increasing, most nurseries continue to sell more non-native species than native. Making matters worse, they often sell invasives. Due to a lack of knowledge, many of my clients have often unwittingly purchased invasives and added them to their own yards! Via seeds and runners, these invasives blow or creep into our parks and wildspaces, adding to the ever growing invasive load that is disrupting these ecosystems. Clear labeling of plants, particularly those that are native to Maryland would help reduce these unhappy accidents and help save homeowners from frustrating and costly mistakes and also help protect our parks and wildspaces.

As the movement towards native landscaping increases, the landscaping industry needs more professionals knowledgeable in the use of native plants and we need access to more locally sourced and grown native plants. The public needs more access to locally sourced and grown natives and research based information on native plants and ecological landscaping. Funding positions within Maryland Extension for native plant specialists would help support industry professionals and home gardeners who are seeking guidance on native/ecological landscaping best practices.

The movement towards ecological landscaping is already upon us, we need better labeling of native plants and funded positions to help support this critical shift of how we manage our lands that is vital to our own health and well being. Please support the Maryland Native Plants Program!

Thank you for your work on behalf of all Marylanders and thank you for taking my testimony into consideration.

Sincerely, Lauren Hubbard

Testimony in Favor of SB836.pdf

Uploaded by: Mary Locke

Position: FAV

Testimony: SB836

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

March 2, 2023

Position: Support

The Maryland state legislature is to be commended for passing laws recognizing the importance of native plants by requiring that each State agency and each entity receiving funding prioritize the use of plants native to Maryland for every planting project. With HB950, you have the opportunity to tackle the retail market and promote native plants to even greater effect.

Did you know that planting ornamentals in your garden is equivalent to plastic flowers? The insects that pollinate our crops and provide food for birds cannot use non-natives. Birds and insects are adapted to plants in their native habitats.

We have all become alarmed at the declining population of monarch butterflies due to the decimation of milkweed. The butterflies are like the canaries in the coal mine. They are desperately trying to tell us how important habitat is for the survival of all species. Birds and insects need a "native plant highway".

This bill will help to educate consumers about native plants; provide an incentive for nurseries to sell more natives by increasing demand; and make it easier to identify natives by creating a labeling program. Business will benefit from this new market. And consumers will be delighted with the fauna that is attracted to their new garden "theater".

This bill is a win/win for our environment, consumers, and Maryland businesses.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Locke

830 West 40th Street, Apt. 222

Baltimore, MD 21211

SB 836_mgoldstein_fav 2023.pdf

Uploaded by: Mathew Goldstein

Position: FAV



March 02, 2023

SB 836 - SUPPORT

Maryland Native Plants Program Senator Brooks Education, Energy, and the Environment

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

This bill promotes the sale of plants native to the state by establishing an official native plant identifying logo and assisting consumers who are so inclined with locating sellers of native plants.

A native plant is one which likely had a presence within our state prior to European settlement. Our native wildlife evolved with the plants here, some can only feed on plants they co-evolved with. Native plants supply food for insects and wildlife that are food for other wildlife. They also provide wildlife habitat more generally (cover and places to rear their young). Native plants are well adapted to our climate and soils and as a result are generally easier to grow and easier to maintain, needing little or no pruning, deadheading, watering, or fertilizing. Please vote for this bill.

Mathew Goldstein
3838 Early Glow Ln
Bowie, MD

SB836Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Matt Bright

Position: FAV

EARTH SANGHA

5101 I Backlick Road, Annandale, VA 22003
703-333-3022 info@earthsangha.org earthsangha.org

Sen. Brian J. Feldman
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
SB0836
March 1, 2023
IN SUPPORT

I am providing written testimony in support of Maryland Senate Bill 836 sponsored by Sen. Benjamin Brooks to promote the increased use of native plants in both residential and commercial landscapes. As Executive Director of the Earth Sangha, a local environmental non-profit, I believe SB 836 is an important step for Maryland to protect natural areas and reestablish biodiverse landscapes that support plant and wildlife conservation.

The Earth Sangha has 25 years of experience protecting the native flora of the Washington D.C. region with a focus on the propagation and restoration of local ecotype native plants. To that end, we operate an exclusively local-ecotype plant nursery propagating over 300 species of wildflower, grass and grass-allies, ferns, trees, and shrubs, distributing over 50,000 plants annually. We work closely with ecologists, botanists, and land managers across local, state, and federal agencies as well as other non-profits, schools, faith organizations, and private landowners to protect our locally native plants and their habitats.

Native plants form the backbone of our ecosystems, providing food for pollinators, habitat for birds, mammals, amphibians, and reptiles, and crucially, by providing food for insect herbivores like caterpillars— a fundamental building block for our ecosystems. Unfortunately, non-native plants do not provide these same positive ecological interactions. Indeed, many commercially-available non-native plants become invasive and degrade our natural areas, reducing the quality of habitat, and spoiling natural areas and the public's enjoyment thereof.

Integrating native plants into residential and commercial areas will not just foster beautiful landscapes but help recreate a biodiverse and climate resilient environment that we can be proud to pass on to our children, our grandchildren, and generations forward.

Sincerely,



Matt Bright
Executive Director
Earth Sangha
mbright@earthsangha.org

*Selected by the Catalogue for Philanthropy
as one of the best small charities
in the Washington, D.C., region."*



*This is a 100% post-consumer waste recycled,
process chlorine-free paper manufactured
entirely with wind-generated electricity.*

SB836_Testimony_ShoreRivers_SUPPORT.pdf

Uploaded by: Matt Pluta

Position: FAV



Testimony in SUPPORT of SB836 – Maryland Native Plants Program

March 1, 2023

Dear Chairman Feldman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in **SUPPORT** of **SB836** on behalf of ShoreRivers and the organizations listed below. ShoreRivers is a river protection group on Maryland's Eastern Shore with more than 2,000 members. Our mission is to protect and restore our Eastern Shore waterways through science-based advocacy, restoration, and education.

This bill will create the Maryland Native Plants Program, which will promote the use and sale of plants that are native to Maryland, and provide education and outreach to the public about the benefits to using native plants. The University of Maryland Extension Office will hire native plant specialists to help with this education component and provide a valuable resource for residents looking to make positive changes on their personal and community properties. This program will also be supported by the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Agriculture, both of which already have the infrastructure in place to promote Maryland-centric goods and services. Since these systems are already in place it would require only a minor lift to include native plants in these promotions.

Species extinction and habitat loss are two major issues facing native plants and animals, as well as many of the food systems and ecosystems that humans depend on. With thousands of species at risk of extinction within the next few decades due to habitat loss and fragmentation, Marylanders need to protect and restore as much land as possible for pollinator species through the use of native plants. **By making these plants more accessible and their benefits better understood, Marylanders will be able to make real, tangible improvements to their local ecosystems that will benefit local species and local water quality.** Many local nurseries are interested in stocking more native plant material and have already begun replacing many non-native or invasive options with native alternatives. This bill will make this process much easier, as well as provide promotion for the nursery. Using signage, stickers, and other easy to understand visual devices will make it easier for residents with no plant knowledge to make the right choices. More and more research is showing that stitching together small habitats into conservation corridors may make the essential difference needed for all species, including our own, to thrive. In a time when it is easy to feel despondent about our environmental future, native plants provide a viable path forward.

We support this bill because it will make native plants more accessible to Marylanders and prioritize their use at the local scale, while improving habitat value and local water quality. We urge the Committee to adopt a **FAVORABLE** report on **SB836**.

Sincerely,

Zack Kelleher
Sassafras Riverkeeper, on behalf of ShoreRivers

Other organizations in support: Assateague Coastkeeper and Waterkeepers Chesapeake.

ShoreRivers

Isabel Hardesty, Executive Director

Annie Richards, Chester Riverkeeper | Matt Pluta, Choptank Riverkeeper | Zack Kelleher Sassafras Riverkeeper

shorerivers.org | 443.385.0511 | info@shorerivers.org

Testimony for SB0836.pdf

Uploaded by: Meredith McDonagh

Position: FAV

Meredith McDonagh
710 Hampton Lane
Towson, MD 21286

SB0836
“Maryland Native Plant Program”
Hearing Date: March 2, 2023
Education, Energy, and the
Environment Committee
Favorable

Good afternoon. My name is Meredith McDonagh, from Towson, and speaking for several garden clubs.

I am in favor of the Legislation SB0836.

Every spring I impatiently wait for the Indian Pink (*Spigelia marilandica*) to bloom- red/yellow flowers calling hummingbirds to drink, in summer there is red cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*) followed by lavender Obedient plant (*Physostegia virginiana*). Then in early fall a large flock of chattering robins comes to feast on the red berries of my American holly (*Ilex opaca*). What links these experiences together is, literally, the buzz, movement and vibration surrounding and amongst the native plants; I feel very happy to feed hungry creatures as I am in their “world”. The garden is “alive” with life and activity.

If I do not see insects on a plant, then there is a good chance it is not native and not even a good food or habitat source.

Over the years I see fewer native plants on my wooded land with stream; my garden has become “quiet.” It may look pretty, but it lacks vibrancy and is quite flat; it is essentially a dead zone. What is left withstands drought and deluge and requires minimal care. I am currently adding more natives to fenced my yard, helping wildlife and the planet. We need to do this for future generations.

Our smaller nurseries are a true gift, equipped with trained and knowledgeable staff. They offer straight species and cultivars of, with some system of signage and information, which is terrific and which I do not see at big box stores. Alas, these nurseries are located usually in a suburban area- not urban where also needed.

For me, it would be more helpful to have the plant information available and consolidated in ‘one place,’ making it easier to refer to in real time at a shop when time is short. And I would like to see more variety and number of straight species available to grow on my property. Straight species offer maximum genetic diversity and “flexibility” (1) and so can adapt to our changing climate conditions. Straight species hosts specific fauna and since most are open pollinated*, there is a longer bloom time across time, as individual flowers bloom independently across time. (2). This means a longer lunch hour for wildlife! Last, they are imperative as a source for future development of native cultivars.

I support a Native Plant Specialist position for many reasons including for/to:

*Change public perception and behavior and from the Horticultural (pretty plants!) to inclusions and emphasis on the Ecological (need for natives for crop pollination and genetic source). Make choosing natives an easy option and respond to public’s desire to help protect/foster pollinators/food chain. Perception of leadership and authority.

*Information – centralization, consolidation, current, researched to make best decisions and to make it easy for the public to know which is a straight native species, where to find them and with cultural requirements cited. Publicize all local events and sales of native plants.

* Influence: advocate for and authority for use of native species on public property, the ability to update old landscape manuals (i.e., Baltimore County).

*Focus on latest research for such as:

- Current information on cultivars, including nutritional value of, which could be a doorway into increased choice of straight species natives and over non-natives by the public because the public is usually more familiar with cultivars than species.

- Expanding definition of the range of natives to MD based on climate change and changing bird migration. .

*Stakeholder support for best outcome of intended legislation:

Currently, nurseries bear much of the responsibility of educating the public when purchase is at hand and when the customer may have not researched information beforehand. Shocking but true: “I want to buy a native Japanese Maple.” Japanese means from Japan, nowhere in USA! “I want to plant native; how about a Euonymus?” This is a popular, heavily used plant which the public may assume is native because it is prevalent, familiar in the landscape.

Certification possibility for the future: assuage unease about what this currently means for nurseries that feel they are doing a good job now of offering native plants.

In closing: no native plants mean, ultimately, no wildlife. The lack of natives affect so much- our food chain/pollination/stormwater management/climate change tolerance/clean water, etc. Environmental issues permeate every other challenge or issue we face as human beings. Thank you for supporting future positive possibilities!

(1, 2): [Genetic-Diversity-and-Plant-Presentation-PDF.pdf](#)

*open pollinated: referring to sexual reproduction, these are plants pollinated by animals (birds, insects, etc.), wind or humans or they self-pollinate, resulting in seed that is true to the parent plants' genetic make-up.

Sources:

<https://lawnlove.com/blog/native-cultivar-vs-straight-species-native-plants/>

[Genetic-Diversity-and-Plant-Presentation-PDF.pdf](#)

Senate testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Nancy Blois

Position: FAV



Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

SB836 Maryland Native Plants Program

Position: Support

Hearing date: March 2, 2023

Nancy Blois for The Horticultural Society of Maryland.

Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and Honorable Members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee, The Horticultural Society of Maryland writes in support of SB836, the Maryland Native Plants Program.

The Horticultural Society, whose mission includes cultivating and promoting interest and participation in plants and horticulture, is acutely aware of the threats to our environment. As we work to adapt to climate change and its challenges, it is more important than ever to be mindful of and sensitive to preserving conditions and habitats that support our local populations of pollinators. In Maryland, where agricultural crops are a key component of the economy, it is incumbent on us to be sure that pollinators are able to survive and thrive. Bees and other pollinating insects are necessary for crop pollination and these insects in turn depend on native plants for the pollen that feeds them. The promotion of native plants—that is, plants that grew in the Mid-Atlantic region on their own, without being brought here to be planted by humans - plays a key part in maintaining conditions conducive to the well-being of these critically important insects.

The proposed legislation will increase public awareness about the importance of choosing native plants for home landscaping and to make it easier to quickly and easily locate plants that are native to this area. By promoting access to information describing Maryland natives and clear labeling of native plants at the point of sale (the big box home improvement store or the garden center) the citizen can more easily choose appropriate plants

Please support the passage of SB836 and support the health of our ecosystem and the pollinators so essential to our food supply.

Respectfully,

Nancy Blois

The Horticultural Society of Maryland

info@mdhorticulture.org

THE HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY OF MARYLAND, INC.
MAILING ADDRESS: P. O. Box 4213, Lutherville, MD 21094-4214
TELEPHONE: 410-821-5561 www.mdhorticulture.org

Bee City testimony_SB836_Maryland Native Plant Pro

Uploaded by: Nancy Lawson

Position: FAV



POSITION: FAVORABLE

Maryland Native Plants Program, SB 836

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee, March 2, 2023

Testimony of Howard County Bee City

Howard County Bee City is working to expand pollinator habitat, increase awareness of native bees, and empower residents, business owners and property managers to help alleviate and reverse declining populations of bees, butterflies, and other insects. We are a coalition of public and private partners working under the auspices of Bee City USA, a program of the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation.

The pollinators we're working to protect would not be able to survive without native plants. And the plants themselves—including both native species and those grown in food crops—would not survive without pollinators.

Maryland is home to about 400 bee species, from large and fuzzy bumblebees to tiny mining bees. Most are solitary nesters and don't sting at all because they have no hives to protect. Many of our native bees are specialists, meaning that they must gather pollen for their young from only one or a handful of native plant species. For these bees, dandelions won't do. They need spring beauties and violets, asters and goldenrods, willows and redbuds and native dogwood bushes, among others.

Yet still too few nurseries carry these plants, and too few people even know about them at all. Consumers buy what's available, and often what's on deck at the local garden center are plants that are antithetical to creating pollinator habitat, including invasives such as burning bush, Bradford pear, and English ivy.

One of our greatest challenges as a Bee City group is to get the word out about why native plants are important, where they are available, and which ones are most helpful to our local pollinators. To that end, in our four years of existence, we've created native plant garden templates and a spreadsheet profiling native species local to our area. We've held a yearly violet photo contest and a people's-choice-style vote for best pollinator plant.

In spite of our education and outreach efforts, people still face hurdles when they head to a nursery. The choices can be overwhelming, and confusion is rampant. For example, some plants labeled as "U.S. natives" are endemic to completely different regions. More often, though, there just aren't very many native choices at all.

A state-sanctioned, volunteer labeling program would not only provide clarification for consumers; it would also be a great marketing tool for nurseries. Over the years we've heard many nurseries say that they can't carry natives because there isn't enough demand. But there isn't enough demand because people don't even know about the plants to begin with.

Together we can resolve this catch-22 conundrum: groups like ours can help fuel demand while environmentally minded nurseries increase their supplies simultaneously. This is already happening organically, but it's still haphazard, and progress is slow. Our pollinators can't

afford to wait any longer for us to get our collective act together. Let's pass SB 836 to help accelerate the process and provide an invaluable resource for Marylanders, a boost to local businesses, and critical intervention for our beleaguered pollinators. Thank you!

For Howard County Bee City,

Pollinator Committee Co-Chairs:

Julie Costantino, Sustainability Project Manager, Howard County Office of Community Sustainability

Nancy Lawson, The Humane Gardener, LLC, Sykesville, MD

Humane Gardener testimony_SB836_Maryland Native PI

Uploaded by: Nancy Lawson

Position: FAV



POSITION: FAVORABLE

Maryland Native Plants Program, SB 836

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee, March 2, 2023

Testimony of Nancy Lawson, The Humane Gardener, LLC

When I began growing a plant called butterflyweed from seed 23 year ago, I did it because the flowers were my favorite orange color. Only later did I realize how important that plant was to butterflies, when I found a monarch caterpillar munching away on the leaves.

When I started growing tall switch grasses from seed one spring, I did it because they looked good around my wooden swing. It was only later that I realized how important native grasses are to birds, when I saw a whole flock of white-throated sparrows devouring the seedheads in autumn.

At the time, none of my local nurseries sold native plants. I hadn't learned about them in school. There weren't many books or articles written about them. Instead, it was the pollinators and birds and other animals who taught me that for wildlife, native plants are not just a preference; they are a homeland. At our place, they are the homeland of scarlet tanagers, Baltimore orioles, wood thrushes, pickerel frogs, and Eastern box turtles. Where we once had only a single butterfly species, we now have dozens. Our garden even hosts *Bombus pensylvanicus*, a threatened species better known as the American bumblebee.

These local flora and fauna are some of the original Marylanders. They are as much a part of this place as the Chesapeake Bay and the Allegheny Mountains and all the hills and valleys and rivers in between. They have intricate, interdependent relationships that ripple throughout the food webs. Our native, hometown plants are foundational to these interactions, providing food, shelter and protections from the storms throughout our ecosystems.

Yet many people don't even know their names. I only know because I did extensive research over a period of many years. I became a Maryland master gardener, master naturalist, and certified Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professional, and I've written two books on nurturing local habitat.

Most people don't have time to go to such lengths to learn about plants, even if they want to help the environment. But if we strengthen our labeling and education efforts, they won't have to. They'll be able to learn what to plant on quick trips to their favorite local nursery business or quick visits to our state agency websites. SB836 will empower consumers and motivate plant sellers to do their part to nurture and restore the real, natural Maryland in their own backyards. I hope you'll join us in supporting this important legislation. Thank you!

Nancy Lawson
1148 Day Rd.
Sykesville, MD 21784
(humanegardener.com)

SB836_dtallamy_Udel_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Patty Mochel

Position: FAV



SB836 Maryland Native Plant Program - FAVORABLE

Delegate Dana Stein
Maryland House of Delegates
and
Senator Ben Brooks
Maryland State Senate

February 16, 2023

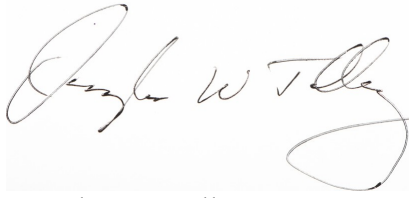
Dear Delegate Stein and Senator Brooks:

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for the idea of creating a native plant program in the state of Maryland. I have been studying the effects of landscaping with non-native plants over the past 20 years from my position at the University of Delaware and, to cut to the chase, the impacts have been devastating on biodiversity at all trophic levels. As much as 80% of the landscape plants in residential and public landscapes are now non-native ornamental plants, largely from Asia. Many species, such as Callery pear, burning bush, autumn olive, Norway maple, porcelainberry, privet, Amur honeysuckle, Japanese honeysuckle, multiflora rose, oriental bittersweet, and many more have escaped cultivation in our yards and invaded natural areas, displacing native flora and the animals it supports. Even the species that are not invasive are now the first trophic level, the plants supplying energy to local food webs, in 135 million acres of residential landscapes throughout the U.S. And that is the problem; non-native plants are poor at passing the energy they have harnessed from the sun on to animals. No energy, no animals. No animals, no ecosystem! This is particularly true of insects, the little things that run the world. Quite simply, without insects, terrestrial ecosystems would collapse in months, with little surviving such collapses, including humans. Our reliance on non-native plants is encouraging the biodiversity crisis. North America has already lost 3 billion breeding birds and 45% of it is insects. The U.N. predicts that we will lose 1 million species to extinction in the next 20 years if we don't provide the basics: a place to live and something to eat. Thus, the native plant movement. There is no reason why we cannot increase the percentage of productive native plants in our landscapes. The notion that restricting sales of invasive plants will put nurserymen out of business is nonsense. If we put more plants in our landscapes, we will boost the nursery industry, not restrict it.

The public supports the transition from ecologically unproductive non-native plants to productive natives. It now recognizes that plants are more than decorations, and that the future of conservation is going to happen on private property and will be conducted by private citizens. Today the demand for native plants far outstrips the supply. Coordinated state support of native plant growers would help bridge this gap and lead the way to 21st century landscaping. The

transition to native plants is happening across the nation and Maryland could be a leader with a state supported Native Plant Program.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Douglas W. Tallamy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Douglas W. Tallamy
T.A. Baker professor of Agriculture

Myers Testimony - Senate Bill 836.pdf

Uploaded by: R G Willse III

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 836, Maryland Native Plants Program

Hearing Date 3/2/2023

FAVORABLE

Linda Myers
1430 Ivy Hill Road
Cockeysville, MD 21030

I am writing **IN FAVOR** of SB 836, Maryland Native Plants Program.

It is well established that native insects, birds, and other wildlife species are in rapid and startling decline. Native plants are an essential part of the food web and necessary for the survival of all species, including humans. Marylanders are becoming more aware of this crisis and are looking for information and resources to help them contribute to rebuilding and sustaining our native wildlife.

As a Master Gardener in Baltimore County, I am often asked for information on plants native to our region, how to identify them, where to buy them, how best to grow them. As a gardener and homeowner, I am also seeking this kind of help. This program would provide an authoritative source on what plants are native where we live and where to purchase them. At retailers, these plants would be clearly identified. In addition, this program would encourage Maryland growers and retailers to grow and sell consistently labeled straight native species. Consumers want to buy and grow these plants, and Maryland can be a leader in promoting native plants and creating new businesses, as well as supporting positive solutions to the environmental crisis we face. In conjunction with the 2022 legislation (HB15/SB7) that focused on reducing invasive plants, this program can make a real difference in Maryland.

SB836_R_JENKINS_FAV_testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Robert Jenkins

Position: FAV



February 28, 2023

Maryland Native Plant Program (SB 836)

Dear Chairman Feldman and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment 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 Maryland Native Plant Program (SB836).**

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 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 prevent sediment runoff. Native plants 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. Native plants are an integral part of a healthy and functioning ecosystem.

There is often confusion about whether a plant is native or not depending on the source of information. Our nursery staff is responsible for engaging and educating Baltimore communities about the many benefits and uses of indigenous plants. In furtherance of Blue Water Baltimore's mission, we promote opportunities for Green Stormwater Infrastructure and conservation landscaping whenever possible. Our team develops landscape designs and provides plant material for community and residential projects that create harmony between human preferences and ecosystem benefits. SB 836 will support these efforts by providing resources and education that will be readily available and accessible to all Maryland residents, as well as providing information on where native plants may be obtained.

SB 836 will support the growth of native plants and the native plant industry in Maryland. Education, coupled with the voluntary participation in labeling of plants as Maryland natives will act as drivers within the industry. This will incentivize growers and retailers to, if they choose, increase the Maryland native plants offered beyond the threshold level, allowing for greater recognition through the listings on the state websites.

We urge a favorable report on SB 836.

Sincerely,

Robert E. Jenkins

Rob Jenkins
Herring Run Nursery Manager

Mary E. Lewis

Mary Lewis
Herring Run Nursery Assistant Manager

SB 836 - National Aquarium - Maryland Native Plant

Uploaded by: Ryan Fredriksson

Position: FAV



Date: March 2, 2023

Bill: SB 836 - Maryland Native Plants Program

Position: Favorable

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee:

The National Aquarium respectfully requests a favorable report for **SB 836 - Maryland Native Plants Program**, which will promote the use and sale of native plants and educate the public on the importance of native plants.

Native plants play a vital role in Maryland's ecosystems. They help improve water quality because, unlike their nonnative counterparts, they do not rely on additional watering, fertilizers and pesticides to thrive. They also play an important role in supporting local wildlife and migratory species. Planting native species attracts local pollinators from caterpillars to birds and crucial bees, which help us all by pollinating everything from cultivated crops to wildflowers.

More needs to be done to prioritize the use of native plants across the state. Creating a formal Maryland Native Plants Program will increase the benefits native plants provide to Maryland's wildlife by allocating additional resources to promoting their use and educating the public.

We applaud the bill for developing a voluntary certification program for native plant growers and retailers and for encouraging strategies to make native plants more identifiable to consumers. Consolidating a list of certified native plant growers and retailers within the University of Maryland Extension will also make it easier for those interested in purchasing native plants. The Commercial Maryland Native Plants list developed in SB 836 will make timely information and resources about native plants accessible to everyone in the state.

Saving wildlife and habitats is one of the National Aquarium's strategic conservation goals. This bill aligns with that goal by increasing awareness about the benefits and availability of Maryland native plants. **We urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on SB 836.**

Contact:

Ryan Fredriksson

Vice President, Government Affairs

410-385-8276

rfredriksson@aqua.org

SB0836_Tangren_Testimony_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Sara Tangren

Position: FAV

Sara Tangren, Ph.D.
326 Boyd Avenue
Takoma Park MD 20912

Testimony in favor of SB0836 Maryland Native Plant Program
March 2, 2023

Greetings,

Favorable.

The Green Towson Alliance proposed this bill to improve the commercial availability of Maryland native plants. I am Dr. Sara Tangren, and they invited me to speak because I have published research on this topic. In 2018, I led a team that surveyed 760 people who buy native plants and seeds to do their jobs.

Our survey shows that

- **94%** of respondents say commercial shortages make it difficult for them to purchase native plants and seeds.
- **95%** want more continuing education opportunities, fact sheets, and research.
- **75%** expect their demand for native plants to increase.
- **74%** said they prefer locally sourced native plants and seeds
- **418 miles** is the average distance that respondents go to buy commercially available native seeds.
- **and** Even though we didn't ask any questions about labels, 46 respondents wrote comments about bad experiences they've had with poorly labeled potted plants.

Before our survey, nine others produced similar responses. My colleagues' concerns about the poor commercial availability of locally sourced native plants and seeds are well-supported by the literature.

Along with my written testimony, I have submitted a summary and link to the full publication.

Thank you!

SB 0836_IndivisibleHoCoMD_FAV_VirginiaSmith.pdf

Uploaded by: Virginia Smith

Position: FAV



SB836 – Maryland Native Plants Program

Testimony before

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

March 2, 2023

Position: Favorable

Mr. Chair, Mdm. Vice Chair and members of the committee, my name is Virginia Smith, and I represent the 750+ members of Indivisible Howard County. We are providing written testimony today in support of SB836, which would establish a program to encourage and promote the use and sale of plants native to Maryland. Indivisible Howard County is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members). We appreciate the leadership of Senator Brooks in sponsoring this important legislation.

Most people enjoy a beautiful yard or wandering around a lovely park. But after years of importing plants, we are finally seeing the benefits of planting native species. Native plants are healthier, stronger and better suited to the natural climate. By requiring less watering, fertilizer, and pesticides, native plants help the environment and can improve air quality. They also provide the habitat needed for wildlife, such as bees, birds, and butterflies.

This bill creates a Maryland Native Plants Program, to encourage and promote the use and sale of native plants, as well as educate the public, landscapers, and others on the benefit of native species. Part of this bill creates a voluntary program for growers and retailers to be certified as a Maryland Native Plant Grower or Retailer, which will help residents buy and use native plants.

For these reasons, we support SB836.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

We respectfully urge a favorable report.

Virginia Smith
Columbia, MD 21044

Brooks_SB836.pdf

Uploaded by: Benjamin Brooks

Position: FWA

BENJAMIN BROOKS
Legislative District 10
Baltimore County

Education, Energy, and the
Environment Committee



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Annapolis Office
James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 303
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3606 · 301-858-3606
800-492-7122 Ext. 3606
Benjamin.Brooks@senate.state.md.us

District Office
Windsor Mill Office
8419 Liberty Road, Suite B
Windsor Mill, Maryland 21244
410-496-4037

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT OF SB836
Maryland Native Plants Program

Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
March 2, 2023

Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you on SB836– Maryland Native Plants Program. The purpose of this bill is to encourage and promote the use and sale of plants native to Maryland at certain businesses and to educate the public on native plants. Furthermore, it would require the University of Maryland Extension to develop several programs to promote native plants and educate the public on them.

Native plants are crucial to Maryland’s ecosystem and food-chain. Not only do they contribute to our environment’s biodiversity, but they are also the only food source for many important pollinators including bees, butterflies, and other insects. Studies suggest that restoring native habitat near farms can also increase crop yield. Further, since native plants have deeper root systems, they act as filters to keep our waterways cleaner.

SB836 will support native plants in three ways:

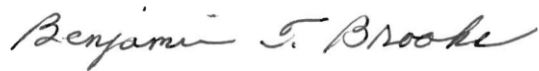
1. It would require the University of Maryland Extension to hire a Native Plant Specialist to administer the Native Plants Program which would encourage the use and sale of native plants by garden centers and nurseries. The coordinator would also teach the public and landscapers about the benefits of growing native plants and growing techniques
2. The University of Maryland Extension, in coordination with the Department of Natural Resources and the Maryland Native Plant Society, will also be required to develop a native plant list and a marketing program called “Maryland Natives” to promote the use and sale of native plants. This will be done through a sticker program where retailers may place “Maryland Native” stickers on approved plants.
3. These same agencies will also create a voluntary certification program for growers and retailers to be identified as a Maryland Native Plant Grower or Retailer.

Many plant buyers in Maryland want to support the local environment. Having an outreach program activate their sensibilities is key to shifting consumer sentiment towards native plants. Furthermore, a native-plant specialist will provide much-needed guidance for taking care of these plants.

Similar programs have been initiated in other states. In 2022, New Jersey unanimously passed the Jersey Native Plants Program which established a labeling program for plants sold at nurseries. Furthermore, the New Jersey Department of Transportation is required by law to use only native vegetation for landscaping and habitat restoration projects.

By, supporting our native plants, we can support our entire State's ecosystem but that begins on the grassroots level by educating consumers and landscapers. For these reasons, I am requesting a favorable report on SB836.

With kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Benjamin T. Brooks".

Benjamin Brooks

SB 836 - Maryland Native Plants slides.pdf

Uploaded by: Benjamin Brooks

Position: FWA

HB 836 - Maryland Native Plants Program

Sponsor: Senator Benjamin Brooks

Garden commentary by Margie Brassil,
Legislative Director to Delegate Dana Stein

Native Garden in Spring: One view of a front yard native garden planted in 2010.



Native Garden in July: A different view of the same front yard garden, planted in 2010.



Close-up view of flowers in Slide 3. A slightly blurry closeup of the Echinacea in slide 3, with a commercial description of the plant. I bought it because it looked great with the Yarrow and Black-Eyed Susan and because of the description—I wanted pollinator friendly plants. However, as I’ve since learned, “Hot Papaya” is an Echinacea hybrid that produces no seeds for birds to eat, and I haven’t seen a single bee or butterfly on the plant in the 12 years I’ve had it. It’s just pretty.



Echinacea “*Hot Papaya*”

- Beneficial for Pollinators
- Attracts Butterflies
- Good for Cut Flowers
- Deer Resistant
- Fragrant
- Long-Blooming
- Winter Interest

The photo on the left is another closeup from Slide 3 showing Terracotta Yarrow. Turns out, it is also not a Maryland native; however, it does attract bees. On the right is a photo of Common Yarrow—not from my garden—which I’ve seen on some lists as being native to Maryland. On the other hand, the University of Maryland Extension (UME) classifies it as a weed.



Achillea millifolium “Terra Cotta”
Terracotta Yarrow

The parent species, common yarrow, is native to temperate regions of Eurasia and is naturalized in North America.



Achillea millefolium
Common Yarrow
Considered native to Maryland in some lists.
UME lists it as “a perennial broadleaf weed”

CONCLUSION:

Gardeners need a reliable list of Maryland Native Plants

Thirteen years ago, there were no good lists of what is or isn't native in Maryland. I thought since Echinacea was a native plant, the Hot Papaya version would be fine.

Today, there are lists of native plants on a variety of websites, but they aren't necessarily helpful or complete, nor are all plants on these lists available to purchase in a local Maryland nursery.

Many of my garden plants were bought online from out-of-state nurseries because it was just so difficult to find them in Maryland.

I would much rather have bought them locally.

Support with Amendment of SB 836 - Maryland Native

Uploaded by: Colby Ferguson

Position: FWA



Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

3358 Davidsonville Road • Davidsonville, MD 21035 • (410) 922-3426

March 2, 2023

To: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

Re: **Support with Amendments of SB 836 - Maryland Native Plants Program**

On behalf of our Farm Bureau member families in Maryland, I submit this written testimony in support with amendments of SB 836. This bill establishes the Maryland Native Plants Program to encourage and promote the use and sale of plants native to Maryland at retail garden centers and wholesale nurseries and to educate the public on native plants. It requires the University of Maryland Extension to administer the Program in coordination with the Department of Agriculture and requires the University of Maryland Extension to hire an extension agent to serve as a native plant specialist.

This bill looks to prioritize the sale and use of native plants in Maryland. However, one issue with the bill is that it excludes cultivars and hybrids as native plants. This makes it a challenge as plant breeders use crossbreeding to improve the viability of the plant to survive in our unstable climate today.

MDFB will be requests an amendment to remove this exclusion.

Amendment #1: On page 2, strike lines 13 & 14

MARYLAND FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS SB 836 & REQUESTS A FAVORABLE REPORT AS AMENDED

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Colby Ferguson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Colby Ferguson
Director of Government Relations

For more information contact Colby Ferguson at (240) 578-0396

NativesBillSB0836.pdf

Uploaded by: John Murphy

Position: FWA



Maryland Green Industries Council
210 Fallen Horse Circle, Suite 100
Queenstown, MD 21658
(p) 443-262-8491

Date: March 1, 2023

Senate Bill 0836 – Maryland Native Plants Program

Committee: Environment and Transportation

MaGIC Position: **Support with Amendment**

The Maryland Green Industry Council, representing nursery, landscape, greenhouse, garden center, and arboriculture professionals is opposed to Senate Bill 0836 – Maryland Native Plants Program, as written, however would offer support of this bill with amendment. As written, the bill seeks to define a “native plant” as one that does not include a named or unnamed cultivar or hybrid. The amendment proposed is to remove this language, which is found on page 2, lines 13 and 14 of the bill.

The industry as a whole encourages the planting of native plants. Industry values their importance, loves to sell them, and encourages customers to plant them. Plants, however, routinely cross pollinate and hybridize naturally. Natural mutations and variegations occur in native populations, as well. 'Cultivar' names are given to these plants to distinguish their physical differences, but they are no less 'native' than the original plant. Original species can be designated as such, but cultivars should not be excluded as a native.

Cultivars may also be intentionally grown with purpose to create a plant with greater benefit to habitat and the eco-system than the “original” native. Benefit may include such traits as greater fruit yield or enhanced pollination tendencies – characteristics that serve wildlife and the eco-system.

Also of note, cultivars serve to protect the survival of entire species. Case in point, the American Elm population, a tree native to North America, was virtually wiped out after it succumbed to Dutch Elm Disease. USDA was successful in developing a disease-resistant cultivar which has enabled the species to be “re-introduced”, and thrive, both in the build landscape and in the wild. For example, the recently planted American Elms on the National Mall in D.C. are products of the disease-resistant cultivars produced originally by USDA. Without the work done to produce a native cultivar, it’s safe to say that the American Elm population in the United States would be on the brink of extinction. And this is just one example of a native species being saved by the production of a native cultivar.

Nurseries and retailers in Maryland seek amendment to this bill to remove the language that exclude cultivars from the definition of a native plant, for the aforementioned reasons. Industry retailers also note that there are a very limited number of businesses that do not grow or sell cultivars. The elimination of “..a plant that is a named or unnamed cultivar or hybrid...” from the proposed Maryland Native Plants Program will effectively quash the program.

MaGIC respectfully requests amendment to SB0836 to remove lines 13 and 14 from page 2 of the bill’s original draft.

Contact: Joe Miedusiewski, americanjoe@oldlinelobbying.com

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Maryland Native Plant Program.pdf

Uploaded by: Steve Dubik

Position: FWA

Maryland Native Plant Program

The Steve Dubik, Professor, Environmental Horticulture and Sustainable Agribusiness, Montgomery College supports HB 950 with several important amendments.

Native plants are an important category of plants that are responsible for supporting our local ecosystem including pollinators. They are specific to soils and geography and often have ranges that cross state boundaries but are recognizable as native due to their historic presence in a defined area. However, the definition of "Native Plant" as currently written in the definitions of this bill is both problematic and ultimately unenforceable.

One problematic issue is there multiple lists by varying organizations as to what is native to Maryland. One very popular native plant list by the US Fish and Wildlife Service which lists native plants that are native to the Chesapeake Watershed. Because the large size of the Chesapeake Watershed many of these plants are actually native much farther north and not native to Maryland.

In the light of climate change and the influx of invasive diseases and insects many of the plants currently native in Maryland will have problematic future. So plants like our native oaks, ash, American chestnut and Canadian hemlocks will continue to struggle as the climate changes. The fact is more exotic diseases and pests our being introduced to our state and more are expected to come in the future the Asian long horn beetle. The Asian Long Horn Beetle is devastating our native Sugar and Red maples in New England It is only a matter of time before the Asian Long Horn Beetle arrives in Maryland.

The future of many species in Maryland will depend on upon them adapting to these rapid changes in our climate and exotic pests. It is well known that our native plants are struggling to adapt fast enough to keep up with these changes. We need the flexibility of hybridizing our Maryland natives with plants who extend outside the range of Maryland.

We to make sure to included plants like hybrid American chestnut which is cross of the American and Chinese chestnut. They are very close to have a resistant cultivar of American chestnut that has about 5% or less Chinese chestnut in its genome.

Such bill will also exclude Dutch Elm disease resistant cultivars of American elms – like *Ulmus americana* ‘Jefferson’ which was found on Jefferson Street by the Smithsonian castle.

As written, cultivars **and hybrids** of native Maryland plants would be excluded from consideration for inclusion in this program, even though their genetics are native to Maryland. Cultivar is an abbreviation of ‘Cultivated Variety’.

Proposed changes to the definition are below:

- On page 2 line 7 delete “ecosystem, and habitat, without direct or indirect human action” and insert “Ecoregion III, as defined by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)
- On page 2 line 13 delete ”does not include a plant that is a named or unnamed cultivar of hybrid”, and insert “includes both naturally found and horticulturally produced plants which have the genetics of the plants that are indigenous to Maryland and Ecoregion III as defined by USEPA, including plants that are named selections or hybrids of two Maryland native plants.
- On page 4: at the end of line 17 . add “Plant labeling shall include information to indicate if the plant is seed grown or propagated vegetatively.”

With these proposed changes I Steve Dubik, Professor, Environmental Horticulture and Sustainable Agribusiness support give HB 950 a favorable report

SB 836 - MoCo_Shofar_SWA (Ga23).pdf

Uploaded by: Steven Shofar

Position: FWA



Montgomery County

Office of Intergovernmental Relations

ROCKVILLE: 240-777-6550

ANNAPOLIS: 240-777-8270

SB 836

DATE: March 2, 2023

SPONSOR: Senator Brooks

ASSIGNED TO: Education, Energy, and the Environment

CONTACT PERSON: Steven Shofar (steven.shofar@montgomerycountymd.gov)

POSITION: Support with Amendments (Department of Environmental Protection)

Maryland Native Plant Program

The Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) supports Senate Bill 836 with several important amendments. Senate Bill 836 is focused on cultivating native plants in the horticultural industry and creating a Maryland Native Plant program through the University of Maryland Extension that includes a new position for a native plant specialist. Native plants are an important category of plants that are responsible for supporting our local pollinators and other species. They are specific to soils and geography and often have ranges that cross state boundaries but are recognizable as native due to their historic presence in a defined area. However, the definition of “Native Plant” in the bill is both problematic and ultimately unenforceable.

As written, cultivars of native Maryland plants would be excluded from consideration for inclusion in this program, even though their genetics are native to Maryland. The term “cultivar” is an abbreviation of “cultivated variety.” They can be fully native Maryland genetics in their composition and are distinguished from other non-cultivars of that plant by the addition of a cultivar name.

Cultivars may be selections from a natural population based on a trait, like color, form, or size or be the product of breeding efforts (for disease resistance or size for example). There are several cultivars of native plants that are selections. The term “selections” refers to plants that are not modified in anyway but are chosen for their specific traits and assigned a cultivar name that follows the genus and species of the plant. In addition, some plants are dioecious, meaning male and female flowers are on separate plants. This is the case of for the *Ilex* genus (hollies). Named selections are cultivars (e.g. *Ilex opaca* Satyr Hill). Where there are no named selections of dioecious species, consumers do not know if they are buying a male or a female and must depend on there being a plant of the opposite sex near the final planting site. Further, due to variable sizes of offspring of the same plant, some are known to be short. Thus, a named cultivar allows consumers to make informed decisions to purchase

the appropriately sized and sexed plant for their landscape. Selections of native plants still embody native genetic provenance and should be included in this program.

It is important to note that the majority of plants native to Maryland do not have a cultivar name; those that do are often the only representative of that plant available in the trade. For those consumers looking to only buy native plants, excluding these cultivars eliminates whole categories of native plants.

We propose changes to the definitions set forth in the bill to expand the designation of Maryland native plant to include plants with cultivar nomenclature, providing that they are selections or crosses of Maryland natives. It would also be appropriate to designate plants as seed grown or vegetatively propagated to ensure consumers make informed decisions. Proposed language is below.

Proposed changes to the definition are below:

- On page 2, in line 7, delete “ecosystem, and habitat, without direct or indirect human action” and insert “Ecoregion III, as defined by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)”.
- On page 2, in line 13, delete ”does not include a plant that is a named or unnamed cultivar of hybrid” and insert “includes both naturally found and horticulturally produced plants which have the genetics of the plants that are indigenous to Maryland and Ecoregion III as defined by USEPA, including plants that are named selections or hybrids of two Maryland native plants”.
- On page 4, at the end of line 17, add “Plant labeling shall include information to indicate if the plant is seed grown or propagated vegetatively.”

With these proposed changes, DEP requests that the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee give Senate Bill 836 a favorable report.

UMD Testimony SB836 native plants UME.pdf

Uploaded by: William Hubbard

Position: FWA



Testimony before the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
SB836 - Maryland Native Plants Program
Favorable with Amendments

March 2, 2023

Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for considering the important issue of supporting the Maryland Native Plants Program. University of Maryland Extension (UME) provides applied research, education, and assistance for Maryland and its people in agriculture, youth development, public health, and natural resources. Our expert faculty and staff engage hundreds of thousands of residents per year, delivering programs in person and online in all 23 counties and Baltimore City.

I would like to share information regarding the increased interest in native plants in Maryland as well as the increased demand this is placing on UME commercial and residential Extension horticultural experts. The input I share comes from Extension colleagues and administrators with extensive experience supporting our residential and commercial horticulture stakeholders.

The data and information to support this testimony comes from several sources. One is from one of our statewide flagship effort known as the Home and Garden Information Center (HGIC). The Center's website received over 3.3 million unique page views in 2022. Faculty and staff with the Center and throughout the state answered over 6,600 web-based questions from the public on home horticulture and other topics. The HGIC website witnessed a 90% increase in unique page views related to native plants between 2021 and 2022. Consumers sought planting and maintenance recommendations for native gardens and meadows and how to manage pest, disease, and abiotic problems. UME county-based Extension offices have seen increased requests for information and educational materials on native plants.

UME commercial horticulture faculty have seen increased requests for native plant consultations from commercial greenhouses and nurseries too. This bill requires UME to teach growers techniques for growing native plants for the Maryland commercial horticulture industry and other stakeholders. UME has a long history of conducting applied research and providing educational programming for Maryland's nursery, landscape, greenhouse, arboriculture and supporting industries.

UME currently cooperates with MDA on programs in nutrient management, pesticide applicator training, seafood safety and promotion, and crop promotion. MDA and UME have a good working relationship in these areas and we would expect the same in native plants.

The proposed Maryland Native Plant Program highlight the need for funding to increase UME capacity to support Maryland's residential and commercial native plant stakeholders. UME does not currently have a native plant specialist to manage the bill's proposed requirements of Extension.

We're working closely with the sponsors of this bill and the cross-file in order to ensure Extension can provide support and expertise that aligns with our mission and also ensures the Maryland Department of Agriculture and Extension are working together on this important initiative.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony on the increase in native plant interest that UME has witnessed from our residents and commercial grower industry. Funding to assist native plants adoption will benefit our environment, our economy, and our society.

20230301144620444.pdf

Uploaded by: Richard Watson

Position: UNF



To whom it may concern,

I am the owner of The Perennial Farm in Glen Arm MD. We have been in business here in Maryland for over 40 years growing Native Plants. I have a number of concerns about House Bill 950 first and foremost lines 13 and 14 stating this bill doesn't include native cultivars. This would eliminate many native species that are good pollinators which is the main reason to have and use native plants.

I have been in contact with many of the growers in Maryland that grow these plants and they feel the same way I do and if this bill is voluntary as it states there will not be many growers like me signing up for it. Next is that many growers like myself are already promoting native plants across the State and have their own programs with the marketing materials that go with the program which would make things redundant.

Lastly, if anyone wants to put together and have a native program this can be done now without any regulations. Native Plants are important and there is already a lot being done across the State in their behalf which to me makes this bill seem unnecessary!

Thank you,
Richard Watson