

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,

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