



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