

Testimony in **SUPPORT** of House Bill 90
House Environment and Transportation Committee
Local Government – Regulatory Powers – Control of Running Bamboo
February 8, 2023

The Honorable Kumar Barve
Chairman
Environment and Transportation Committee
Room 251
House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Dana Stein
Vice-Chair
Environment and Transportation Committee
Room 251
House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chairman Barve and Vice-Chair Stein,

Catonsville Rails to Trails submit this testimony in strong support of House Bill 90. This bill, sponsored by Delegate Foley, authorizes the governing bodies of counties to adopt ordinances relating to the upkeep and containment of running bamboo. This bill also provides that the governing body of a county, by ordinance, may prohibit a person from allowing running bamboo to grow on the property of a person without proper upkeep and appropriate containment measures, including spreading to a public right-of-way.

The mission of Catonsville Rails to Trails (CRTT) is to unite individuals, businesses, and organizations in the community around the common theme of promoting healthy living through hiking/biking trail enhancements in the greater Catonsville area. CRTT is a 501c3 nonprofit this is run by community volunteers. CRTT builds and maintains trails using community donations and volunteer labor. Catonsville trails are enjoyed by thousands of residents of all ages every year. Our trails are located in older neighborhoods that often lack sidewalks and our trails provide safe access for pedestrians, cyclist, joggers, residents and students. All of our existing and proposed trails provide an economic focus by bringing trails through commercial centers including the Village business district of Catonsville, Catonsville Junction, Oella and Ellicott City. Two of our trails are handicapped accessible with paved surfaces. Trails are open sun-up to sun-down, 365 a year for residents to bike, birdwatch, walk their dogs, geo-cache, or enjoy a seat in natural woodland environments on one of the many locally owned business sponsored benches along the trails.

Invasive species, specifically running bamboo, pose a serious threat to the ecosystems that are home to our trails. As a trail system organization, invasives like bamboo are a big problem. Our experience is with an adjoining property owner who carelessly planted bamboo which has spread to our trail and continues to expand at 25 ft/year, tripling in size. We attempted cutting back the bamboo at considerable expense, however it returned within 3 months. We won't use pesticide due to nearby water issues. We're now hiring a contractor to encapsulate the bamboo field, to prevent further expansion at additional considerable expense. This bamboo is choking out native plants and wildlife.

Volunteer community organizations add tremendous value to local jurisdictions, and CRTT is a hugely successful with their local fundraising efforts, local and national grant awards, and partnering with other local and statewide organizations to share and stretch resources that are invested back into the development, maintenance, and upkeep of the local trail system for all to enjoy. Running bamboo damages the trails and compromises ability of the organization to maximize the impact of our resources. In addition, residents complain about the invasive species disrupting the woodland forest surrounding our trails and creates the perception that our organization is responsible for the bamboo, which, if left unmitigated, could create mistrust among our members and supporters. On behalf of Catonsville Rails to Trails, we urge you to offer full support of HB 90.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sheldon Smith
President
Catonsville Rails to Trails