



February 17, 2023

2279 Lewis Avenue □ Rockville, Maryland 20851
301-881-8130 □ Fax 301-881-3695

As a licensed tree expert (LTE) 319, I am writing in opposition to House Bill 612, Natural Resources- Licensed Tree Experts- Alterations.

Section 5417 (2) (1)

I'm not certain, under current law, what fines are incurred by those caught operating without a valid LTE in Maryland. I do know that in 2022, only 17 companies were cited for operating without such a license. It seems to me that the chances of getting caught without a license are fairly remote and a \$500.00 fine is simply a cost of doing business to those who are unlucky enough to be apprehended.

I also don't know what the cost to the State is in prosecuting a person operating without a license but I would think that it would be considerably more than \$500.00.

My thought is that the State significantly raise the fine for an offending company to actually cover their costs or make the fine so high that it would actually deter a company from operating in the first place without a license.

Section 5-417 C

I'm certain there are more but I can think of two scenarios where this is a bad idea. In the event of a major storm, this would preclude licensed tree expert (LTE) companies from hiring non-LTE companies from outside our area to assist in the rapid removal of trees on houses, across driveways and streets. It has been my experience as an LTE for 45 years that Maryland residents want a return to normalcy as rapidly as possible. This would also eliminate the employment of utility line crews from outside the area from aiding in clearing downed power lines from trees.

There are over 400 companies in Maryland that employ only one LTE. Should that person suddenly die, there are provisions in the current law that allow those employees to continue to work but under a license from another company until an employee can pass the LTE exam. What I believe is most important to the citizens of Maryland is the work being performed is still being performed under the supervision of an LTE who is obligated to make certain the work is being performed correctly.

Section 5-418

The State now requires that LTE's show proof of both liability and Workers' Compensation Insurance. Our Worker's Compensation category is established by our insurance carrier based on the type of work we perform. I believe the intent to change the existing wording of the law is that all LTE's should now be in the 0106 SIC code allocated for those engaged in tree climbing, removals, etc. Should this be the case, this new provision would unnecessarily quadruple my companies' annual cost for workers' compensation insurance.

It is the insurance companies responsibility to monitor through audits where companies should be placed for workers' compensation insurance. This should not be a function of State.

Please issue an unfavorable report for this bill.

Sincerely,



Paul L. Wolfe, II

President

Integrated Plant Care, Inc.