



February 22, 2023

HB-612 Natural Resources – Licensed Tree Experts - Alterations

**SPONSOR:** Delegate Courtney Watson

**POSITION:** Favorable

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Good afternoon, Chairman Barve, Vice Chairman Stein, and members of the committee. Thank you for allowing me to present House Bill 612.

I have been in business and held a Maryland Tree Expert License since 2010. It has been in my professional experience as a business owner that our industry has been facing an increasing amount of unlicensed, improperly insured, and completely non-legal businesses.

This seems to be more apparent when large storms hit our area and the need for experienced tree professionals is in high demand; these “businesses” see a short-term way to make quick money. To do this, many companies/ individuals who are not licensed seek out other licensed individuals to buy the ability to use their license information and work as a “licensed” tree expert. This gives homeowners and businesses who hire these “licensed” tree experts the illusion that these individuals have the know-how and the proper insurance to safely and properly perform tree services at their homes and properties.

I personally know of several individuals and small businesses who are operating every day in this manner. These individuals/ companies are advertising and operating as if they are legitimate Maryland Licensed Tree Experts and carry the correct form of insurance coverage specifically workers compensation. Additionally, I know first hand of individuals doing this that have tested to earn their license and have not passed the examination (knowing they had this loophole).

It is in my opinion that allowing individuals/ companies to operate in this manner not only hurts the consumer but also hurts legitimate businesses who need to compete with these individuals/ companies for employees and for jobs (contracted tree services). Our company has lost 3 quality employees for this very reason. Within my group of colleagues, I know they are experiencing the same situations across the industry.

While I do not believe that this bill addendum is enough to completely solve this problem, I believe it is a step in the right direction to start giving the DNR more authority to enforce our laws. The next step for the state may be to provide additional funding and resources to the DNR to improve enforcement of this new law and the previous law. Without enforcement, we will be in the same situation we are in currently and our industry will continue to be degraded.

I respectfully ask that you provide a favorable report on House Bill 612.

Please feel free to contact me through email or phone if you would like to have a further conversation on this matter.

Sincerely,  
Ben

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