



February 28, 2023

Testimony SB836 Maryland Native Plants Program - FAVORABLE

Kirsten Hoffman for the Green Towson Alliance

Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and Honorable Members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee,

The Green Towson Alliance writes in support of the passage of SB836 Maryland Native Plants Program. The Green Towson Alliance is a coalition of environmentalists who advocate for a greener, healthier, more sustainable community in Baltimore County.

Biodiversity, the variety of animals, plants, fungi, and microorganisms that make up our natural world, supports everything in nature that we need to survive: food, clean water, medicine, and shelter. Biodiversity loss is often cited as the biggest existential threat facing our world today. By a simple act, however, each of us can help mitigate this threat. That simple act is adding native plants to our landscapes. Through planting natives, we can start to provide much needed habitat and start to reconnect fragmented habitats benefiting the pollinators and wildlife that make our lives possible.

Consumer demand for native plants is increasing as more and more people hear the message of all the benefits native plants provide. The University of Maryland Extension recently reported that its most visited webpage in 2022 was “Recommended Native Plants for Maryland”. A 2021 survey by the National Wildlife Federation in partnership with the National Gardening Association found that 1 in 3 U.S. adults purchased a plant to help wildlife and 1 in 4 are specifically looking to purchase native plants, a 26% and 17% increase over 2020 respectively.

As consumers, how do we know which plants are Maryland natives? How do we identify Maryland native plants when we go to a nursery? How do we find nurseries that carry a wide choice of native plants?

This bill seeks to address those issues. It establishes a list of commercially available Maryland native plants that both consumers and the nursery trade can reference on state websites. The bill creates a “Maryland Natives” logo which can be used by nurseries both at the point-of-sale and on their websites to label Maryland native plants found on the commercial plant list. The bill also creates a voluntary certification program for native plant growers and retailers who choose to sell a significant amount of native plants.

When you start to understand what native plants provide for us, it is no wonder that more and more consumers are asking for them. Native plants support our pollinators (bees, butterflies, insects) which in turn support bird and wildlife populations. They help reduce stormwater runoff to keep the Bay cleaner, and, once established, require less irrigation, fertilizer and maintenance than lawns and non-native ornamentals.

“Native plants are the most powerful tool in our conservation toolbox.” according to Dr. Doug Tallamy of the University of Delaware. “Without increasing their use and protection, we will fail in our conservation efforts.”

Please give a favorable report on SB836 to support our Maryland consumers, Maryland plant nurseries and Maryland pollinators and wildlife.

Respectfully,

Kirsten Hoffman

for the Green Towson Alliance

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We have received wide support for this bill across environmental groups, plant nurseries, garden clubs and ordinary gardeners. Some of the supporters include:

Sierra Club

Audubon Mid-Atlantic

Maryland Native Plant Society

Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake

Maryland Ornithological Society

Safe Skies Maryland

Horticultural Society of Maryland

Wild Ones

Blue Water Baltimore

Green Towson Alliance

Garden Club of Chevy Chase

Catonsville Garden Club

Green Spring Valley Club

Bona Terra

Izel Native Plants

Lauren's Garden Service

Archewild

Earth Sangha

Unity Church Hill Nursery

Hardy Garden Club

Georgetown Garden Club

The Trowel Garden Club

Amateur Gardeners Club

Halten Garden Club

Talbot Garden Club

Guilford Garden Club