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DEPUTY MAJORITY WHIP

Appropriations Committee

Subcommittees

Oversight Committee on Pensions

Chair, Transportation
and the Environment



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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HB-561 Tree Expert Licenses - Renewal Fee Alterations

SPONSOR: Delegate Courtney Watson

POSITION: Favorable

Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee. I am here today to present HB-561, Tree Expert Licenses - Renewal Fee Alterations, which is similar in nature to HB-612 that this committee heard and passed during the 2023 legislative session.

Last year, this committee heard testimony regarding the dangerous nature of the tree trimming industry, not just to those who work in the field, but also to the environment and to the consumer when tree care is performed improperly.

A significant cause for concern has been the lack of oversight putting workers and landowners at risk - due in part to the Department of Natural Resources (DNRs) slow response time to complaints submitted because of lack of staffing and resources.

The Maryland Arborists Association (MAA) expressed concern over a provision of HB-612, which limited the number of companies under an individual's license.

After extensive meetings with the MAA, DNR, and industry members, we have drafted a bill that addresses the same problem we attempted to tackle last year but this time with the support from all stakeholders involved.

HB-561 as drafted removes the current cap on DNR to increase fees for the application and renewal of a Tree Expert License. By allowing DNR the ability to increase fees, which is currently set at \$15, which no longer even covers the cost of processing the application, we provide additional resources so that DNR can provide better oversight of licensees.

There is one amendment that will specify a cap on the cost of application and renewal fees which will be provided directly to the ENT committee as soon as it is available.

I kindly request that this committee submit a favorable report and I am happy to answer any questions.

Courtney Watson

Delegate Courtney Watson