



Montgomery County

Office of Intergovernmental Relations

ROCKVILLE: 240-777-6550

ANNAPOLIS: 240-777-8270

SB 178

DATE: January 31, 2024

SPONSOR: Senator Klausmeier

ASSIGNED TO: Finance

CONTACT PERSON: Steven Shofar (steven.shofar@montgomerycountymd.gov)

POSITION: Support (Department of Environmental Protection)

Agriculture – Pollinator Habitat Plan – Requirements for State Highway Administration

The Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) supports Senate Bill 178. Senate Bill 178 requires the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) to develop a pollinator plan that encourages the use of pollinator-friendly native plants along State highways. The plan will include policies for educating and communicating with the public about pollinator habitat areas. The bill requires SHA to apply for federal funding that supports pollinator habitat, native plants, and invasive species control. The bill also requires SHA to annually update the plan.

SHA controls many acres of land in the State through its rights-of-way. As such, SHA is a land steward and it is incumbent that the Administration recognize the environmental impact of its land management practices on pollinators. Indeed, rights-of-way are not only transportation corridors for people but also pollinators. Pollinators are under environmental pressure from loss of habitat, chemical applications and other land management practices including land conversion, frequent mowing, salt, and allowing Non-Native Invasives to eradicate pollinator plant habitats.

Hopefully, SHA is planting native plants indigenous to Ecoregion III, as defined by the United States Environmental Protection Agency with preference for those found naturally in the mid-Atlantic Region. In order to appropriately issue planting work, SHA should develop a pollinator plan for its properties along State highways. Resources for this work have already been developed such as the Pollinator Partnership's *Selecting Plants for Pollinators – A Regional Guide for Farmers, Lands Managers and Gardeners Central Appalachian Broadleaf Forest, Coniferous Forest and Meadow Province*.

Based on the assurance that the State Highway Administration as a policy plants only native or non-invasive species, DEP requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 178.