

SB0317_DNR_SUP_EEE_2-11-25.pdf

Uploaded by: Ashley Triplett-Peltzman

Position: FAV



Wes Moore, Governor
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor
Josh Kurtz, Secretary
David Goshorn, Deputy Secretary

February 11, 2025

BILL NUMBER: Senate Bill 317 – First Reader

SHORT TITLE: Food Forests and Foraging Program – Establishment

DEPARTMENT’S POSITION: SUPPORT

EXPLANATION OF DEPARTMENT’S POSITION

The Department supports the passage of SB 317 as it establishes a program that aligns with DNR’s mission to lead the state toward a resilient future and improve ecological, social, and economic outcomes for all communities. The “Food Forests and Foraging” program will establish locations on state lands where the public is permitted to harvest plant material for the purpose of consumption. This program will create legal means for foraging on state land and set up a dedicated fund in support of this program.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

SB 317 is an addition to Article – Natural Resources Section 5–2101 through 5–2104 under the new subtitle “Subtitle 21. Food Forests and Foraging Program.”

BILL EXPLANATION

SB 317 mandates the establishment of a “Food Forests and Foraging” program within DNR; requires the establishment of a permit process; and a special, nonlapsing fund in the Department for the implementation of the new program. The Bill also requires the establishment of a fee waiver process for individuals who demonstrate financial need.

Contact: Emily Wilson, Director, Legislative and Constituent Services (Acting)
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Testimony in support of SB0317 - Natural Resources

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

SB0317_RichardKaplowitz_FAV

02/11/2025

Richard Keith Kaplowitz
Frederick, MD 21703-7134

TESTIMONY ON SB#0317 - POSITION: FAVORABLE
Natural Resources - Food Forests and Foraging Program – Establishment

TO: Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of/ SB#/0317, Natural Resources - Food Forests and Foraging Program - Establishment

This bill addresses establishing a Food Forests and Foraging Program on areas owned or managed by the Department of Natural Resources.

Human food foraging in community forests offers extensive and expandable sources of food and high-quality nutrition that support chronic disease prevention and management and are underrepresented in US diets. Despite severe gaps in non-commercial “wild food” data, research in Syracuse, NY, identified substantial amounts of five key antioxidant phytochemicals in locally available, forageable foods with the potential to augment local dietary diversity and quality. Findings endorse the need for micro- and macro-nutrient research on an expanded range of forageable foods, community nutrition education on those foods, an expanded study on antioxidant phytochemical function, and the inclusion of forageables in the food system definition.¹

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources has a website **Living off the Land in Maryland’s Forests**.² They state:

Foraging is a great way to enjoy the outdoors, take in scenic views and return home with some native delicacies for your kitchen! Always use caution when identifying foraging species as some mushrooms, for example, can be poisonous if ingested. A good ID book will help you identify the best the forest has to offer. As a responsible forager, a good rule of thumb is to leave at least 30% of what you found in the forest.

This bill defines "foraging" as harvesting plant materials, including seeds, nuts, mushrooms, roots, tubers, and berries for noncommercial personal consumption. The bill creates a responsible pathway to the implementation of a foraging program.

¹

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10647252/#:~:text=Human%20food%20foraging%20in%20community,are%20underrepresented%20in%20US%20diets.>

² <https://dnr.maryland.gov/cookbook/Pages/Living-off-the-Land-in-Marylands-Forests.aspx#:~:text=Foraging%20is%20a%20great%20way,the%20forest%20has%20to%20offer.>

It will govern the practice by requiring individuals who forage in a food forest to obtain a permit. This management function for foraging will require the Department to charge a permit application fee and establish a fee waiver process for individuals who demonstrate financial need. Monies collected will be allocated to establishing the Food Forests and Foraging Fund.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB0317.

SB0317 Foraging Cover Letter (Written Testimony).p

Uploaded by: Senator Karen Lewis Young

Position: FAV



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The Honorable Chair Feldman
The Honorable Vice Chair Kagan
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Senate of Maryland

February 11, 2025

SB0317: Natural Resources - Food Forests and Foraging Program - Establishment

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

The purpose of this bill is to establish and maintain food forests on state lands and to regulate foraging within these food forests. The bill requires the creation of foraging permits with a fee waiver process for those with financial needs. The revenue from the permits will provide funds for the Food Forests and Foraging Special Fund. This fund will be used to maintain the established food forests on state lands.

Food forests and foraging programs provide the community with a sustainable means of gathering nutritiously dense foods while at the same time furnishing an opportunity to be out in nature. A Food Forest and Foraging Program created and administered by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources is an innovative way to increase community access to diverse food sources while enhancing food security.

There are many benefits to food foraging. Studies have shown that foraged and naturally grown foods expand a community's affordable, nutrient-dense dietary alternatives¹. A food foraging program enhances community well-being by making healthy foods more accessible and affordable to lower income individuals. In addition, food foraging is a sustainable way to increase biodiversity in the ecosystem, which can provide resilience in the face of climate change. Once established, food forests are naturally regenerative, low maintenance, and can enhance wildlife habitat. Finally, foraging allows individuals to spend less money for more nutritious food, create less garbage, and lower our carbon footprint.

¹ <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10647252/>

KAREN LEWIS YOUNG
Legislative District 3
Frederick County

Budget and Taxation Committee



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The DNR estimates that establishing food forests will cost approximately \$10,000 per acre. However, this is an initial expense estimate only. It is expected that the fee structure for the permits will be able to cover the ongoing costs of maintaining this program through the Special Fund.

Establishing foraging programs on state lands will add foraging to the list of ways to access healthy foods in a way that benefits both the community and the environment.

I urge the Committee to give Senate Bill 317 a favorable report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Karen Lewis Young". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, flowing "Y" at the end.

Senator Karen Lewis Young

SB317_FAV_Permaculture Club.pdf

Uploaded by: Tierney Acosta

Position: FAV

SB 317 SUPPORT

Natural Resources - Food Forests and Foraging Program - Establishment

Environment and Transportation Committee

February 11th, 2025

Good afternoon Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and Environment and Committee:

My name is Tierney Acosta and I am testifying favorably in regards to Senate Bill 317. I am the President and Founder of the Permaculture Club at Montgomery County Community College and I am majoring in Horticulture and Sustainable Agri-Business. As of May 2024, 40% of the student body at Montgomery College is experiencing food insecurity ¹. The Permaculture Club has partnered with the Community Food Forest Collective (CFFC) to tackle this issue head on, specifically on the Takoma Park - Silver Spring campus, and have transformed 33,000 square feet of what was once just grass into a Community Food Forest ².

This community food forest aims to bring localized and nutritious food straight to our students, faculty, staff, and surrounding communities completely free of charge. Since founding the Permaculture Club in 2023 I've met a wide variety of Maryland residents excited about our Food Forest Collective and the Food Forest on our campus, but more importantly they were eager to come back and help. For many, it was their first time being introduced to the amazing native food growing within Maryland. American persimmons, pawpaw's, black raspberries, purple, flowering, raspberries, native grapes, like muscadine, and Riverbank, and blueberries are just some of the amazing foods that are already growing within our state lands. When our visitors learned this, the message became clear: Marylanders are ready to forage.

We are ready to rekindle our relationship with the food that grows right here in our state . And although I am immensely proud of our success with our 33,000 square feet, Our food forest does not begin to cover the complete need in the state of Maryland. According to Maryland Food Bank, 1 in 3 Marylanders is currently experiencing food insecurity ³. By allowing Marylanders access to the food that grows on state lands with this new permitting system, it increases the options that Marylanders have in regards to their own food resiliency. By allowing DNR to

waive the permitting fee for our community members who are low income it ensures that this will be accessible to those who could benefit from it most.

Foraging for plants on state lands in the state of Maryland is currently not allowed, and Senate Bill 317 will not only make it legal, but ensure that it is accessible and regenerative. I urge a favorable report on SB 317 and thank you all for listening to my testimony today.

¹<https://bethesdamagazine.com/2024/05/17/takoma-park-edden-a-montgomery-college-student-leads-community-in-growing-food-forest/#:~:text=At%20Montgomery%20College%2C%20about%2040,Takoma%20Park%2FSilver%20Spring%20campus>.

² <https://projectfoodforest.org/what-is-a-food-forest/>

³<https://mdfoodbank.org/hunger-in-maryland/>