

HB 257 - SUPPORT
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Natural Resources - Food Forests and Foraging Program - Establishment

Environment and Transportation Committee

January 29th, 2025

Dear Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

My name is Tierney Acosta and I am testifying favorably in regards to House Bill 257. 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 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. Our food forest does not begin to cover the complete need in the state of Maryland however. According to MARYland Food Bank, 1 in 3 Marylanders is currently experiencing food insecurity ³.

House Bill 257 aims to change this by allowing access to foraging plants on state lands through a new permitting system. I urge a favorable report on HB 257.

¹<https://bethesdamagazine.com/2024/05/17/takoma-park-eden-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/>