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Environment and Transportation  
Committee  
Chair, Land use and Ethics Subcommittee  
  
House Chair  
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and Agricultural Land Preservation



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**THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES**  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

## **Sponsor Testimony**

### **HB802 – State Designations - State Carnivorous Plant - Purple Pitcher Plant**

#### **Health & Government Operations Committee**

13 March 2025

Thank you Chair Pena-Melnyk, Vice-Chair Cullison and members of the Health & Government Operations Committee. I am Delegate Robbyn Lewis, here on behalf of HB 802, which designates the Purple Pitcher Plant as our State's official carnivorous plant.

The idea for this bill came from talking with Dr. Michael Szesze, founder of the Carnivorous Plant Nursery in Smithsburg, Maryland - the largest of its kind in the eastern United States. He wondered why North Carolina has a designated, native state carnivorous plant – the Venus Flytrap – but Maryland does not. I said, I've got a solution for that. Hence, the bill before you.

Carnivorous plants evolved in micronutrient-poor environments like bogs and muddy, sandy shores. They get their nitrogen and phosphorus from the insects and small animals they digest. There are more than 600 recognized species throughout the world, but only a few are found naturally in Maryland.

The Purple Pitcher Plant (*Sarracenia purpurea*) is a Maryland native that lures little bugs into its elegant bowl, dissolving them effortlessly. Sadly, habitat loss has diminished its native range. This otherworldly insect-digester is part of our state's biodiversity and ecological heritage, and as such deserves recognition.

It's time for boring old Black-Eyed Susans to move over and share the limelight with *Sarracenia*, which, by the way can also be grown in carefully managed city garden pots. In fact, after growing this bonny bug-eater in my downtown Baltimore city native garden, I no longer fight with annoying flies. This plant is so special that it has inspired environmentalists, scientists and super smart kids, like Harrison, to stand up and sing its praises. An entire class of 4<sup>th</sup> graders from Prince Street Elementary School on the Eastern Shore agrees!

Thank you for your willingness to stand up for one of Maryland's unsung habitat heroes: the insect-eating Pitcher Plant. I urge a favorable report of HB 802.