



Promoting native landscapes through education,
advocacy and collaborative action.
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**Testimony: SB 282: Budget Bill and SB 284: Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act of 2026
Budget Overview: R30B00, University System of Maryland Fiscal 2027
Committee: Budget and Taxation
Hearing Date: March 4, 2026
Position: Favorable with Amendment**

Chairman, Guy Guzzone; Vice Chairman, Jim Rosapepe; and Honorable Members of the Committee

Wild Ones Nation's Capital Region Chapter¹ supports this bill subject to one amendment. Reinstatement of the \$150,000 budget item for the Maryland Native Plant Program University of Maryland Extension. As described in R30B00². This line item funds the native plant specialist position.

Summary. If the position is not reinstated, an employee will be fired, and outcomes supporting future economic development, environmental benefit and much needed education will be lost.

Position outcomes. Here we highlight just two of the many outcomes thus far. (1) The online *Commercial Plant List*³ provides comprehensive information for many Maryland native plants, currently 644 plants and growing. (2) *The Maryland Native Plant Guide: Piedmont Region*⁴ contains a multitude of valuable information, easily accessed in one place. The Coastal Region book will be published in 2026, and the Mountain Region is planned for 2027, unless the position is eliminated.

Economic Development. Increases in native plant purchases results from this position. The impact on sales tax revenue alone yields a strong return on investment (ROI). More native plant purchases results in growth for both nursery and landscaping businesses of all sizes. Agriculture thrives when there are more native pollinators: those pollinators cannot survive without native plants.

Environment. Maryland suffers from a badly damaged ecosystem due to extensive use of lawns, pesticides, and invasive plants. Native plants are adapted to our conditions such that pesticides and ongoing watering are not needed. As noted, this at-risk position leads to increased native planting.

Education. There is very little understanding of the importance of using native plants and the damage created by common gardening practices. This position delivers educational programs.

Please reinstate this important, and small line item, back into the budget.

Sincerely,

Dorothy Broadman
Director, Legislative Affairs

Pru Foster
President

¹ Wild Ones, a nationwide nonprofit organization with local chapters throughout the country,

² <https://www.usmd.edu/usm/legislation/2026/R30B00-USM-Chancellors-Testimony-USM-Overview-Analysis.pdf>, "Operating Budget Summary" - page 2, paragraph 4; page 26 - Exhibit 19.

³ <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1G4eoUbqfp0M8vwNd-EsgVHB0ISrO0350v-0NwbGdKPO/edit?gid=1701172215#gid=1701172215>

⁴ <https://extension.umd.edu/programs/environment-natural-resources/program-areas/maryland-native-plants-program/maryland-native-plant-guides/>