



SIERRA CLUB

MARYLAND CHAPTER

P.O. Box 278
Riverdale, MD 20738

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment
Testimony: SB 164: Natural Resources – Pamela J. Kelley Tree-mendous Maryland Program -- Alterations
Position: Favorable with Amendments
Hearing Date: January 27, 2026

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club urges a favorable report, with amendments, on HB 255.

“Tree-mendous Maryland,” a program of the Maryland Forest Service, has proven one of the most popular programs at the Department of Natural Resources since the program’s founding in 1989. It performs a much-needed service by helping citizens restore tree cover on public lands and community open spaces in Maryland. It has assisted more than 3,000 towns, community organizations, parks, and schools in acquiring and planting native trees and shrubs. These plants filter our water, absorb greenhouse gases, ameliorate the heat-island effect, provide wildlife habitat, and beautify our state.

To clarify that the program’s funds may be applied to maintenance as well as planting, this bill adds “stewardship” to the allowable costs covered. The bill makes it explicit that the program can support activities that nurture trees (such as watering in drought conditions) and protect them (such as caging to prevent deer damage). At the same time, the new reference to “community forestry activities,” that we expect the sponsor to propose, is intended to ensure that the program cannot be used for logging:

“The Program is established for the purpose of PROMOTING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN TREE PLANTING AND STEWARDSHIP, and for planting and maintaining native trees and shrubs THROUGH COMMUNITY FORESTRY ACTIVITIES on public lands, community open spaces, school grounds, and rights-of-way.”

To further clarify its intent, MD Sierra Club recommends that the bill incorporate a definition of “Community Forestry Activities” such that it “means nurturing of trees (by watering, for example) and protecting trees from damage (by caging, fencing, or removing invasive vines, for example), without the removal of healthy native trees.”

For these reasons, and with these amendments, we urge a favorable report on HB 255.

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Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America’s oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.