



TESTIMONY

COMMITTEE: House Environment and Transportation

DATE: February 10, 2026

POSITION: Favorable

BILL: SB 266

The Maryland Municipal League (MML) supports Senate Bill 266. SB266 is an important piece of legislation that authorizes local governing bodies to regulate the invasive Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) and establish optional bounty programs for its removal. The Tree of Heaven is widely recognized as an aggressive and fast-spreading invasive species that poses significant threats to Maryland's natural landscapes, agricultural interests, and local infrastructure. Its presence also encourages the proliferation of the spotted lanternfly, a destructive pest that further endangers vegetation and crops throughout the state.

By empowering local governments with clear authority under SB266, the General Assembly acknowledges the essential role played by municipalities in protecting environmental health and ensuring the sustainability of their communities. Local leaders are acutely aware of the unique environmental challenges facing their jurisdictions, and they are best positioned to respond quickly and effectively. SB266 honors the principle of local self-determination, recognizing that communities across Maryland may experience invasive species problems differently and may require tailored strategies to address them. Enabling local governments to create bounty programs or enforce targeted regulations allows for flexible, locally driven solutions to the invasive Tree of Heaven problem, resulting in more effective management efforts statewide.

Environmental stewardship and the health of community landscapes are top priorities for MML and our member municipalities. SB266 provides the necessary framework for local action, reaffirms the value of local expertise, and enhances our collective ability to combat invasive species. By passing SB266, the Maryland General Assembly strengthens the partnership between the state and its municipalities and sends a clear message about the importance of local leadership in addressing complex environmental threats.

For these reasons, the Maryland Municipal League respectfully urges the committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 266. We thank you for your attention to this critical matter and for your continued support of Maryland's cities and towns.

For more information relating to this piece of testimony, please contact:

Tyler Brice: Manager, Advocacy and Public Policy, tylerb@mdmunicipal.org

MML represents 161 local governments and about 2 million Maryland residents.