



**Testimony: SB0266, Local Government-Regulatory Powers-Regulation of Tree of Heaven
Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment**

Hearing Date: February 10, 2026

Position: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and honorable members of the Committee:

The Green Towson Alliance supports SB0266, which enables counties and municipalities to manage the spread of Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) and other non-native invasive trees regulated by the Maryland Department of Agriculture.

Maryland law defines an invasive plant as a species that did not evolve in our state and that causes harm to human health, environmental harm, or economic harm. As a certified Weed Warrior in Baltimore City and Baltimore County, I have seen first-hand how aggressively Tree of Heaven takes over disturbed sites, crowding out native plants that support pollinators and healthy ecosystems. It reproduces from seed as well as vegetatively from fast-growing sprouts. Hundreds of its seedlings can quickly shoot up and overtake a newly cultivated agricultural field, impacting crop yield. Other negative characteristics of Tree of Heaven include that it secretes the toxic chemical ailanthone, suppressing the growth of other plants, is a magnet for the invasive Spotted Lantern Fly, and has weak wood prone to breakage.

Clearly, Tree of Heaven needs to be controlled. As part of this bill, the University of Maryland Extension is providing important updated online information on correctly identifying and managing them. Tree of Heaven requires diligence: incorrect removal methods can result in increased sprouting and spread. Continued education about Tree of Heaven and establishing a bounty program will incentivize the reduction of this invasive species in our state.

The Green Towson Alliance urges a favorable with amendments report on SB0266.

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References:

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