



Maryland Native Plant Society

APPRECIATION CONSERVATION EDUCATION

Testimony: SB0164, Natural Resources – Pamela J. Kelly Tree-Mendous Maryland - Alterations
Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment
Hearing Date: January 27, 2026
Position: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

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

The Maryland Native Plant Society (MNPS) urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 164 with amendments. For 37 years, the Tree-Mendous Maryland Program has proven to be a successful and popular program “aimed at restoring tree cover on public land and community open space.” (dnr.maryland.gov/forests/Pages/treemendous). Still, there is room for improvement.

SB0164 broadens the “purpose of the Pamela J. Kelly Tree-Mendous Maryland Program to include the advancement of forest health and resilience through the promotion and maintenance of native trees and shrubs.” The original law only included “planting” of trees and shrubs; however, those plants frequently died, especially in the first few years. Allowing program funding to be used for maintenance would boost plant survival and so reduce costs over the long-term. Furthermore, spending more on promotion would increase the Program’s reach to more Marylanders, including underserved populations with less access to natural areas.

We believe that SB0164 can be improved by clarifying that “advancing forest health and resilience” and “maintaining” do not include the logging of trees or any other potentially destructive practices. Instead, the bill should prioritize the long-term establishment of trees and shrubs, tree canopy, and woodland areas. Consequently, we respectfully request the addition of the following definition or the equivalent:

“Maintaining native trees and shrubs” means protecting the plantings with standard maintenance practices such as temporarily fencing to exclude deer, removal of invasive plants including vines, and treatment for invasive insects and pathogens. Maintenance does not include removing healthy native trees and shrubs.

With SB0164 and this amendment, the Tree-Mendous Maryland Program will increase property values, result in long-term enjoyment for Marylanders, and help meet Statewide conservation objectives, including restoring the Chesapeake Bay. Furthermore, Maryland will have a healthier environment, reduce contributions to climate change by cooling and cleaning the air, and decrease spending on disaster recovery by reducing flooding.

The Maryland Native Plant Society urges a favorable report with amendments on SB0164.

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