

BENJAMIN BROOKS
Legislative District 10
Baltimore County

Education, Energy, and the
Environment Committee
Energy Subcommittee

Chair, Joint Electric Universal
Service Program Workgroup



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Annapolis Office
James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 303
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3606 · 301-858-3606
800-492-7122 Ext. 3606
Benjamin.Brooks@senate.state.md.us

District Office
Windsor Mill Office
8419 Liberty Road, Suite B
Windsor Mill, Maryland 21244
410-496-4037

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 229
General Provisions – Commemorative Month – Maryland Native Plant Month

Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
March 12, 2026

Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and members of this committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of SB 229, Commemorative Month – Maryland Native Plant Month. The purpose of this bill is to designate May as Native Plant Month.

While this bill designates a commemorative month, its purpose is far more substantive than recognition alone. SB 229 creates an opportunity to educate Marylanders about the environmental, agricultural, and economic benefits of native plants and the role they play in the health of our state's ecosystems.

In 2023, the General Assembly enacted legislation establishing the State's Native Plant Program, recognizing the ecological and environmental value of incorporating native plants into landscaping, conservation, and restoration efforts. Since that time, the Governor has also designated May as Native Plant Month through executive order, helping to raise awareness about the importance of native plants and their role in supporting Maryland's ecosystems. SB 229 builds upon those efforts by establishing this recognition in statute, ensuring that this important focus on education and awareness becomes a lasting commitment.

Native plants are uniquely adapted to Maryland's climate, soils, and wildlife. Because of this, they require less water, fewer chemical inputs, and less maintenance than non-native species. For homeowners, municipalities, and land managers, that means reduced landscaping costs and more sustainable land management practices.

Native plants are also foundational to Maryland's agricultural and natural resource economy. They support pollinators such as bees, butterflies, and other beneficial insects that are essential to crop production. Without healthy pollinator populations, many of the crops grown across Maryland would face significant challenges.

Beyond agriculture, native plants strengthen biodiversity, improve soil health, help manage stormwater, and contribute to the restoration of critical habitats throughout our state. As

Maryland continues to address environmental challenges, including climate resilience and water quality, the use of native plants is an important, practical tool.

This bill also supports education and community engagement. A designated Native Plant Month provides a platform for schools, local governments, conservation groups, nurseries, and garden centers to highlight the value of native plants and encourage Marylanders to incorporate them into landscapes, parks, and restoration projects.

In doing so, SB 229 can help expand demand for native plants, supporting local nurseries and growers while advancing Maryland's environmental goals.

For these reasons, SB 229 is more than a symbolic designation. It is a simple but meaningful step toward strengthening environmental stewardship, supporting agriculture, and raising awareness about the natural resources that sustain our state.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask for a favorable report on Senate Bill 229.

With kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Benjamin T. Brooks".

Benjamin Brooks