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Maryland Department of Agriculture

Legislative Comment

Date: February 10th, 2026

BILL NUMBER: SB 266
BILL TITLE: Regulation of Tree of Heaven
MDA POSITION: SUPPORT

The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) respectfully submits this letter in support of *Senate Bill 266 Local Government – Regulatory Powers – Regulation of Tree of Heaven*, enabling counties and municipalities to create bounty programs to manage the invasive Tree of Heaven.

The Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) is a deciduous invasive tree species native to China. It spreads rapidly and grows aggressively, often forming dense stands that crowd out native plant species. Tree of Heaven is Allelopathic, meaning that it produces chemicals that inhibit the growth of other plants, creating a monoculture. This tree is also the primary host for the spotted lanternfly, an invasive insect that depends on the Tree of Heaven to successfully reproduce. Removing this species would help restore native biodiversity and may assist in the spread of the spotted lanternfly.

Allowing counties the authority to regulate Tree of Heaven would be a positive step toward reducing the presence of this widespread invasive species in our environment. For these reasons, MDA strongly supports SB 266 and respectfully requests a favorable report. MDA appreciates the consideration of the above information in the Committee's deliberations.

If you have additional questions, please contact Harrison Palmer, MDA Chief of Staff at Harrisonb.palmer@maryland.gov or (410) 980-9887.