CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

Senate Bill 229

General Provisions – Commemorative Month – Maryland Native Plant Month

Date:	March 12, 2026	**Position:**	**FAVORABLE**
To:	Education, Energy, & Environment Committee	**From:**	Matt Stegman, MD Staff Attorney

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS Senate Bill 229** which would require the Governor to proclaim each May Native Plant Month in Maryland. Such proclamations will provide a great opportunity to educate Marylanders about the numerous ecological benefits of native plant species.

Native plants of Maryland are not only beautiful and diverse, but provide a host of ecological services from support of pollinators, improvement of soil health, fish and wildlife habitats, and resilience to climate change. From the water quality perspective, native plants and their adaptations to Maryland's weather patterns are better at absorbing excessive rainfall volumes and storing water underground for eventual release to surface streams than non-native plants. We call this the "green sponge" effect of our landscape. Use of native plants in urban settings can be even more important as they provide cooling shade and treatment of polluted runoff as well as a sense of connection to the natural world. Ecological science supports the maintenance of native plant cover as the best defense against the establishment of invasive species, especially along shorelines and wetlands throughout the Bay watershed.

Native plants on land also support healthy habitats for submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) to thrive. Bay grasses absorb excess nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus, which helps prevent harmful algae blooms and improves water quality. Additionally, underwater grasses provide habitat for economically and ecologically important animal species like blue crabs, juvenile striped bass, and other aquatic life. Migrating waterfowl, including ducks and geese, rely on them for food. Expanding SAV beds in throughout the Bay is one of the key goals in the newest iteration of the interstate Chesapeake Bay Agreement adopted last year.

CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report on SB 229.

For more information, please contact Matt Stegman, Maryland Staff Attorney, at mstegman@cbf.org.

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The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. With over 200,000 members and e-subscribers, including 71,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.