



Wes Moore, Governor
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor
Josh Kurtz, Secretary
David Goshorn, Deputy Secretary

January 27, 2026

BILL NUMBER: SENATE BILL 164 – FIRST READER

SHORT TITLE: NATURAL RESOURCES – PAMELA J. KELLY TREE–MENDOUS MARYLAND PROGRAM – ALTERATIONS

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: SUPPORT

EXPLANATION OF DEPARTMENT'S POSITION

This proposed legislation will increase the Department's capacity to deliver a broader range of technical and financial resources to support statewide forest conservation goals.

In the decades since the Tree-Mendous Maryland Program was initially codified, Urban and Community Forestry has evolved into a holistic field of practice that extends beyond tree planting alone to include sustained collaboration with local governments, nonprofits, and community partners to deliver the full range of environmental, public health, and climate benefits provided by trees and forests in urban and suburban settings.

By authorizing program funds to be used for the promotion of forest health and resilience, as well as the maintenance of planted trees, this legislation aligns statutory authority with contemporary best practices in urban forestry and ensures that public investments in tree planting result in successful establishment and long-term survival.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Tree-Mendous Maryland, has been helping citizens restore tree cover on public land and community open space in Maryland since 1989. This program aims to increase the number of trees in Maryland, providing residents with access to affordable trees for public lands, parks, and community spaces, fostering a greener Maryland through relationship building and lasting community involvement. Since 2022, over 50,000 trees have been planted using Tree-Mendous Maryland funds.

Since 2021, Maryland residents applying to renew their vehicle registration have the option to make a donation to the Tree-Mendous Maryland program due to an agreement between the Department and the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration/Maryland Department of Transportation. The program has seen a significant revenue increase since the implementation of this donation mechanism.

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BILL EXPLANATION

The bill clarifies that the purpose of the Tree-Mendous Maryland Program is to advance forest health and resilience and expands its scope to include the promotion and maintenance of native trees. This targeted change would significantly improve the Department's ability to deploy program funds, enabling the Maryland Forest Service to address critical forest management needs beyond planting and to deliver a broader range of resources in support of statewide forest conservation.