



## Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 229 – General Provisions -Commemorative Month – Maryland Native Plant Month

March 12, 2026

Dear Chairman Feldman,

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in **SUPPORT** of **SB229** on behalf of ShoreRivers. ShoreRivers is a river protection organization on Maryland's Eastern Shore with more than 2,000 members. *Our mission is to protect Maryland's Eastern Shore waterways through science-based advocacy, restoration, education, and engagement.*

This legislation **requires the Governor to annually proclaim May as Maryland Native Plant Month, and urges education and environmental organizations and businesses to observe this month with appropriate programs, events, and activities.** Maryland already recognizes 20 commemorative days, 7 months, and one week in state law, so this bill will add Maryland Native Plant Month to that list, with no cost to the state. These actions will raise greater awareness about the need for native plants in order to improve local water quality and ecosystem health, and hopefully support local businesses that participate in the programming. For the sake of this bill, native plants are considered plants that were growing in the state of Maryland prior to colonization, which would suggest that they evolved for these specific ecosystems over the course of millions of years.

Utilizing native plants can be one of the most impactful actions that Marylanders can take to start having positive impacts on local water quality and habitat health. **While many policies and practices can take years to have any impact, or impacts that aren't visible, planting native plants and removing invasives species are actions that can be taken almost immediately with some education, at a fairly low cost, and have real tangible benefits to the local community.** Native plants provide a tremendous water quality benefit compared to nonnative or invasive species, and are critical habitat for thousands of native species. One of ShoreRivers' flagship programs is River-Friendly Yards, which works with community members across our territory to increase the amount of native plants on their properties and community spaces using a wide range of educational materials and outreach strategies. This legislation will benefit programs like River-Friendly Yards, because it will cause more people to learn about the importance of native plants, who will then start taking action in their own communities.

We support this bill because it will make native plants more accessible to Marylanders and prioritize their use at the local scale, while improving habitat value and local water quality. We urge the Committee to adopt a **FAVORABLE report on Senate Bill 229**, and encourage the legislature to support policies that invest in watershed health and resilient natural systems across Maryland.

Sincerely,  
**Zack Kelleher, Sassafras Riverkeeper** on behalf of:

### ShoreRivers

Scott Budden, Executive Director

Annie Richards, Chester Riverkeeper | Matt Pluta, Choptank Riverkeeper

Ben Ford, Miles Wye Riverkeeper | Zack Kelleher, Sassafras Riverkeeper