

SB667WrittenTestimony.pdf

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Position: FAV



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Sponsor Testimony in Support of SB667
Natural Resources – Edible Forests and Foraging Program – Establishment
Senator Kevin M. Harris
February 17, 2026

Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan and Members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee,

Food forests are cultivated areas that have food-bearing trees and plants, such as nut trees and berry bushes. A food forest combines the same layers found in a natural forest: root crops, ground covers, herbs, perennials, shrubs, vines, small trees, mid-size trees, and canopy trees. These layers create a rich, thriving, and resilient ecosystem that provides nutritious food for people to eat freely. Food forests are open and available to everyone. The Maryland Department of Natural Resources has already piloted a Food Forest concept by planting its Edible Trail in White Marsh Park near Centreville and behind the City of Brunswick Food Bank in Frederick County.

Separately, foraging is where one goes into the wilderness and harvests plant life in the form of edible berries, mushrooms, herbs, etc. from the naturally occurring wild flora, as opposed to land that was specifically cultivated for human consumption. Foraging is a thriving practice across the country; however, it is currently illegal to forage on state land in Maryland.

With recommendations from the Department of Natural Resources, we requested amendments to make the bill a three-year pilot program limited to two foraging areas designated by DNR. The amendments also remove all permit requirements and add a reporting requirement at the end of the pilot to evaluate successes, challenges, and policy recommendations.

As amended, this bill will:

Establish a foraging pilot program within designated forageable areas established by the Department of Natural Resources. DNR would use this pilot to explore ways to the department could better engage with the public on the activity of foraging.

Any surplus funds collected from the Foraging program, DNR will be used to create cultivated food forest areas on state land, which will be open and accessible for the public to eat from freely.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report of SB667.

SB667_FAV_Kyle_Farmer.pdf

Uploaded by: Kyle Farmer

Position: FAV

HB 72 SUPPORT

Natural Resources - Edible Forests and Foraging Program - Establishment

Environment and Transportation Committee

February 17th, 2026

Good afternoon Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment and Transportation Committee:

My name is Kyle Farmer and I am testifying favorably in regards to Senate Bill 667.

I am the Vice President of the Permaculture Club at Montgomery College. Our mission is to extend knowledge regarding foraging and food security to our student body and surrounding communities. As of May 2024, 40% of the student body at Montgomery College is experiencing food insecurity ¹. The Permaculture Club began to tackle this issue head on, and have transformed 33,000 square feet of our campus into a Community Food Forest ². In these areas, we have created an environment where people can get hands-on experience foraging for foods found all over the State of Maryland.

Since the Permaculture Club was founded in 2023, we have had a substantial amount of interest and engagement from students, and those in our surrounding communities, eager to learn about and try the foods that grow around them. We have had groups of up to 80 people at a time, from all over the DMV, come to listen and learn from some of the master foragers in our areas. These include: Francis Smith of DNR, Ben Gritton of the REED Center in Frederick County, Bodhi Vasilopoulos of Forested in Bowie, and John Harper of the Mycological Association of Washington DC. We have had guests come from Baltimore City, Alexandria Virginia, and even Zimbabwe to come learn about foraging best practices and to get a taste of what our local environments have to offer.

For many, it was their first time being introduced to the amazing native food growing within Maryland. American persimmons, pawpaws, native grapes, and blueberries are just some of the amazing foods that are already growing within our state lands. When our visitors learned this, the message became clear: Marylanders are ready to forage. By allowing Marylanders access to the food that grows on state lands with this new permitting system, it increases the options that Marylanders have in regards to their own food resiliency. **Foraging for plants on the over 500,000 acres owned and managed by the Department of Natural Resources in the state of Maryland is currently prohibited, and House Bill 72 will not only make it legal, but ensure that it is accessible and regenerative.**

¹https://www.montgomerycollege.edu/_documents/offices/institutional-research-and-effectiveness/special-reports/2021-hope-center-real-college-mc-rot.pdf

²<https://www.foodforestcollective.org/montgomerycollege>

I urge a favorable report on SB 667 and thank you all for listening to my testimony today.

SB 667 - CBF - FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Matt Stegman

Position: FAV



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

Senate Bill 667

Natural Resources – Edible Forests and Foraging Program – Establishment

Date: February 17, 2026

To: Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Position: **FAVORABLE**

From: Gussie Maguire,
MD Staff Scientist

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS Senate Bill 667**, which creates an Edible Forests and Food Foraging Program within the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Edible forests and foraging practices exist at a crucial junction of conservation and environmental and food justice. Planting trees on state land to produce edible fruit for visitors to enjoy combines the benefits of planting trees—soil stabilization, carbon sequestration, habitat establishment, and temperature mitigation, among others—with access to fresh food and meaningful interactions with the natural world.

Additionally, as foraging has become a more popular hobby, establishing a formal permit program protects species from overharvest. The fee waiver for individuals in need offsets concerns about equity: laws restricting and banning foraging have historically excluded marginalized communities¹. We appreciate the provision allowing the Department to require an orientation or course on foraging practices, as inexperienced individuals may unintentionally infringe upon others' ability to enjoy the resources by taking excessively or damaging plants and fungi.

CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report on SB 667.

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

¹ The Sierra Club: [Wild Food For All](#)

Maryland Office • Philip Merrill Environmental Center • 6 Herndon Avenue • Annapolis • Maryland • 21403

SB667_Maryland Native Plant Society_Hoffman_FWA.pd

Uploaded by: Kirsten Hoffman

Position: FWA



Maryland Native Plant Society

APPRECIATION CONSERVATION EDUCATION

Testimony: SB667, Natural Resources – Edible Forests and Foraging Program – Establishment

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Hearing Date: February 17, 2026

Position: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Honorable Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Native Plant Society (MNPS) supports SB667 with amendments. The creation of edible forests has the potential to educate the public about the benefits of plants native to our state, while providing food that uses resources efficiently. Promotion of the preservation of Maryland's native plants and their habitats is critical to the MNPS mission.

Edible forests are planted, sustainable, regenerative landscapes that enable the public to collect healthy foods. Several edible forests have been created in Maryland including at White Marsh Park in Queen Anne's County, at Todd Park in Harford County, and at the City of Brunswick Food Bank in Frederick County.

In these food landscapes, people become more aware of the benefits and beauty of native plants. Consequently, visitors might decide to plant natives on their own properties and even become advocates for the protection of native habitats. Additionally, edible forests produce food with a fraction of the resources and maintenance used in conventional farming, allowing nature to do the heavy lifting. Edible forests generally do not require supplemental watering, pesticides, or fertilizers to produce food because the healthy plant infrastructure is sufficient to nurture their growth.¹

We propose two amendments to achieve the full benefits of this edible landscaping to the public and to our environment. First, plants chosen for edible landscaping should be native to Maryland. Our state has many tree and shrub species that produce fruits and nuts, some familiar like paw paws and others that could garner a new following, like American hazelnuts. To ensure that all plants in edible forests are native to Maryland, they should be selected from the over 675 native plants listed on the Commercial Maryland Native Plant List.² Using native plants on state lands would create habitat for the declining populations of our insects, songbirds, and other wildlife, whereas non-natives do not have the same ecological benefits.

Second, edible forest locations should be restricted to currently or previously disturbed state lands, especially in urban and suburban areas, such as turf areas in parks, old agriculture fields, and

The Maryland Native Plant Society promotes awareness, appreciation, and conservation of Maryland's native plants and their habitats. Our engaged, active members represent all 24 state jurisdictions, from the coastal plain beaches to the western mountains. We reach 20,000 followers on social media. MNPS is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization incorporated in Maryland.

Testimony: SB667

Position: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

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developed lands that have recently been abandoned. State-owned natural habitats, which are so critical for the survival of our native plants and animals, should not be converted to edible forests.

Everyone visiting Maryland's natural areas is asked to follow "Leave No Trace" principles to "minimize their impact while maximizing their experience."³ Visitors are asked to "stick to trails" and "leave what you find." As a result, we see many challenges and obstacles to establishing a permitted foraging program in natural areas.

Foraging in natural areas endangers both the environment and the foragers. When visitors leave designated trails, adults and children incur risk through exposure to uneven terrain which could result in falls, and to poison ivy, insect stings, and snake bites. The natural habitat can be damaged because foragers compact soil, trample plants, and disturb nesting animals. Plants, especially mushrooms, can be difficult to identify; so, foragers risk poisoning themselves, even when they have received training. Most critically, how will the Maryland Department of Resources prevent over-harvesting in our state parks and forests by foragers?

MNPS proposes several amendments that would install carefully considered guardrails while still allowing foraging on State-owned land. These requirements would clearly outline what native and invasive species could be harvested during which times of year and weather conditions, and in which clearly demarcated areas. By specifying target species, the risk of mistaking poisonous species for food would be reduced, along with the possibility of harvesting rare, threatened, and endangered plants. Further, roots, tubers, and other underground parts should never be collected because populations of the target species could be decimated, plus digging would cause considerable disturbance that would endanger the health of the forest floor.

Based on the discussion and amendments above, we believe that edible forests are beneficial and with a few requirements should be implemented. In contrast, foraging is riskier for the environment and visitors and so would require more significant protections for natural areas.

The Maryland Native Plant Society urges a favorable with amendments report on SB667.

Kirsten Hoffman

Treasurer, Maryland Native Plant Society

hoffman01@yahoo.com

¹ Maryland Forestry Foundation. Accessed 2/1/26. Have you ever Heard of a Food Forest?
<https://www.marylandforestryfoundation.org/have-you-ever-heard-of-a-food-forest/>

² University of Maryland Extension. Accessed 2/1/26. Commercial Maryland Native Plants List.
<https://extension.umd.edu/programs/environment-natural-resources/program-areas/maryland-native-plants-program/search-tool-plant-guides/>

³ Maryland Department of Natural Resources. Accessed 2/1/26. Leaving No Trace.
<https://dnr.maryland.gov/publiclands/pages/lnt.aspx>

SB0667_DNR_SWA_EEE_2-17-26.pdf

Uploaded by: Lydia McPherson

Position: FWA



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

February 17, 2026

BILL NUMBER: SENATE BILL 667

SHORT TITLE: NATURAL RESOURCES - EDIBLE FORESTS AND FORAGING PROGRAM - ESTABLISHMENT

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

EXPLANATION OF DEPARTMENT'S POSITION

SB 667 establishes a program that aligns with DNR's mission to lead the state toward a resilient future and improve ecological, social, and economic outcomes for all communities. The Department has collaborated with the bill's sponsor to refine the legislation by clarifying key definitions and more clearly articulating the program's purpose.

The Edible Forests and Foraging Program established in this bill does two things: 1.) creates a legal means for foraging on state land through a pilot program, and 2.) any possible revenue captured from this prgrm will be diverted to a dedicated fund, known as the "Food Forests and Foraging Fund," to help support the administrative costs of the permitting program and support the establishment of "Edible forests" on state lands where the public can harvest plant material for consumption.

While the department supports creating this legal pathway for foraging, establishing a more limited pilot program will allow the department to better understand how to manage this kind of program for foraging, the potential impacts on natural resources and revenue capture, and the implications for taking it statewide.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Foraging is growing in popularity as part of local food, sustainability, and environmental education movements. Current Forest and Parks regulations prohibit removing or disturbing plants and natural items on State-owned public lands, such as State parks, meaning foraging is restricted on public land for the general public. This bill would establish a legal means of foraging on state land by creating a foraging permit program, managed and regulated by the department. Additionally, it creates a possible new revenue source for the department to support the establishment of food forests.

The bill grants the department discretion in implementing the Edible Forests and Foraging fund. The department already manages an "edible forest" in Centerville, Maryland, that was funded using grant dollars. Depending on revenue from foraging permits, current department staff could deploy similar forests in other parts of the state.

Contact: Lydia McPherson, Director, Legislative and Constituent Services
lydia.mcpherson1@maryland.gov ♦ 410-260-8113 (office) ♦ 443-875-7785 (cell)

BILL EXPLANATION

SB 667 establishes a “Food Forests and Foraging” program within DNR; requires the establishment of a permit process; and a special, nonlapsing fund in the Department for the implementation of the new program. The bill also requires the establishment of a fee waiver process for individuals who demonstrate financial need. If amended, the bill would establish a foraging pilot program on two state lands to assess demand and potential challenges of implementing a structured program within the department.

BY:

(To be offered in the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee)

AMENDMENTS TO SENATE BILL 667 (First Reading File Bill)

AMENDMENT NO. 1

On page 1, in line 2, after “**Foraging**” insert “**Pilot**”; in lines 3, 11 and 17, in each instance, after “Foraging” insert “**Pilot**”; strike beginning with “requiring” in line 4 down through “need” in line 7 and substitute “requiring the Department to establish certain foraging areas to implement the Pilot Program; requiring the Department to operate the Pilot Program for a certain period of time; requiring the Department to publish a certain report evaluating the Pilot Program on or before a certain date;” and in line 16, strike “5-2205” and substitute “5-2204”.

AMENDMENT NO. 2

On page 2, in lines 10 and 29, and on page 3, in line 1, in each instance, after “**FORAGING**” insert “**PILOT**”; on page 2, strike in their entirety lines 25 through 26, inclusive; in lines 27 and 29, strike “(F)” and “(G)”, respectively, and substitute “(E)” and “(F)”, respectively; and in line 29, before the first “**PROGRAM**” insert “**PILOT**”.

On page 3, in line 3, after “**THE**” insert “**PILOT**”; after line 8, insert:

“(C) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL ESTABLISH TWO DESIGNATED FORAGING AREAS TO IMPLEMENT THE PILOT PROGRAM.

(D) THE PILOT PROGRAM SHALL BE OPERATIONAL FOR A THREE-YEAR PERIOD.

(E) ON OR BEFORE DECEMBER 31, 2029, THE DEPARTMENT SHALL SUBMIT A REPORT TO THE SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE AND THE HOUSE ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE, IN ACCORDANCE WITH § 2-1257 OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT ARTICLE, THAT PROVIDES AN EVALUATION OF THE PILOT PROGRAM, INCLUDING SUCCESSES, CHALLENGES, AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ON WHETHER THE PILOT PROGRAM SHOULD CONTINUE AND BE EXPANDED.

(F) THE DEPARTMENT MAY ADOPT REGULATIONS TO IMPLEMENT THIS SECTION.”

On pages 3 through 4, strike in their entirety the lines beginning with line 10 on page 3 through line 4 on page 4, inclusive.

On page 4, in line 10, strike “5-2205” and substitute “5-2204”.

SB0667_Wild Ones Chesapeake Bay_FAVwithAmendments.

Uploaded by: Marlene Smith

Position: FWA



Wild Ones Chesapeake Bay
15321 Colony Place
Waldorf, MD 20601
240-416-7108
chesapeakebay@wildoneschapters.org

*Deeply rooted in native plants,
promoting native landscapes
through education, advocacy and
collaborative action.*

Testimony: SB0667; Natural Resources – Edible Forests and Foraging Program - Establishment

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Hearing Date: February 17, 2026

Position: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

Chair, Brian Feldman; Vice Chair, Cheryl Kagan, and honorable members of the Committee:

Located in Southern Maryland, Wild Ones Chesapeake Bay, a 71-member chapter of the national organization Wild Ones Natural Landscapers, LTD¹, requests your support for this bill, subject to three amendments. The concept of providing the public with the means to harvest food from forests may seem worthy of consideration at first, but not as the bill is currently written.

Establishing and maintaining healthy forests is important for humans and ecosystems worldwide. *“Beyond their critical role in carbon storage, forests serve as vital shields against extreme weather conditions, such as storms and floods. They are essential in supplying drinking water to nearly half of the world’s largest cities, highlighting their significance in our daily lives. Forests also offer invaluable resources and protection for communities that rely on them for their livelihoods and security.”*²

Forests contain rare, threatened, and endangered species that need protection, and it is my concern that allowing foraging in the limited forests remaining in our state would compromise forest health and lead to loss of these vital natural resources. By preserving our forest and other natural ecosystems, we can preserve our treasured Chesapeake Bay for future generations.

For those reasons, I urge that the bill only be passed with these amendments:

- 1. Eliminate foraging in forests.** Foraging harms ecosystems as foragers step on and crush native plants and compact the soil, negatively impacting the ecosystem.
- 2. Create permaculture orchards on non-natural areas** that are not regaining their natural states, such as lawns, playing fields, and agricultural lands.
- 3. Limit species in these permaculture orchards to those on the Commercial Maryland Native Plant List.**

Wildly appreciative,

Marlene Smith

President, Wild Ones Chesapeake Bay

¹ Wild Ones Natural Landscapers, LTD, a nationwide nonprofit organization with local chapters throughout the country, <https://wildones.org/>

² <https://www.unep.org/topics/forests/why-do-forests-matter>

SB0667_EM_Oppose.pdf

Uploaded by: Ellen Marcus

Position: UNF

Testimony: SB 667, Natural Resources – Edible Forests and Foraging Program - Establishment

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Hearing Date: February 17, 2026

Position: OPPOSE

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Honorable Members of the Committee,

I am a Maryland resident (20912) and have been an advocate for native ecosystems and natural habitats since 2018. I oppose this bill as written.

Summary

I oppose this bill. The term “edible forest” is misleading, and the bill does not require native plants, which means these projects would not function as healthy ecosystems. Without that requirement, this is just publicly funded non-native orchards. Additionally, the foraging permit program poses serious risks to both habitats and visitors, making the bill’s funding mechanism unworkable.

The Problem with “Edible Forests”

The term “edible forest” (more commonly known as “food forest”) is misleading. These are not true forests. They are cultivated orchards designed primarily to feed people, not to function as ecosystems. The standard of this permaculture model prioritizes edible layers over native habitats. Most “food forests” mix non-native species (Dragon Citrus, Figs, Pomegranate, Comfrey, Methley Plum) with a few natives and call it “ecologically healthy.” The ecological claim is based on the unscientific theory that mimicking the vertical structure of a forest (canopy trees, understory, shrubs, ground cover, etc.) automatically creates “a rich, thriving, and resilient ecosystem” (without the need for native plants). But layering non-native plants does not replicate forest ecology. Native insects, birds, and wildlife depend on native plants they co-evolved with, not figs and pomegranates arranged in tiers.

I have first-hand experience with these issues. I spent two years volunteering with a local food forest group, believing they would prioritize native plants. They did not. When I flagged potentially invasive species on their plant lists, they added them to their order list anyway (including an additional 75% non-native tree canopy). The ecology was not their priority. Most food forest groups are made up of horticulturalists, agricultural specialists, business majors, and grant writers, but not actual ecology scientists.

This matters because the word “forest” implies a natural, native habitat. If Maryland is going to put “forests” on public land, they should function as forests (supporting native insects, birds, and wildlife) rather than as multi-layer non-native orchards.

A Missed Opportunity

It is difficult to find examples of food forests that commit to native plants only, because most do not. But it does not have to be this way. The Seattle Arboretum published a guide for designing a native food forest using only regionally native species:

<https://arboretumfoundation.org/2025/09/04/native-food-forest/>

If Maryland required edible forests on state land to use only plants from the Commercial Maryland Native Plant List, this could have been a true pioneer project. Maryland has many native woody species that produce edible fruits and nuts (pawpaws, persimmons, American hazelnuts, serviceberries, elderberries, hackberries, and others). There is no need to import non-native crops or even suggest leaving this open to non-native species.

My Concerns with the Foraging Component

The bill also proposes a foraging permit program on DNR lands. These are my concerns:

- **Poisonous plants:** Even trained foragers can mistake toxic species for edible ones, with potentially deadly consequences. Plant identification is often difficult and can take years to master.
- **Chemical conflicts:** Maryland DNR uses herbicides on state lands to control invasive species. A foraging program would complicate these efforts and could expose foragers to recently treated plants, posing serious health risks.
- **Habitat damage:** Foragers who venture off-trail will compact soil, trample plants, and disturb wildlife.
- **Overharvesting:** Populations of target species (especially slow-growing plants like ramps) could be decimated.
- **Enforcement:** Once people become accustomed to foraging, they will likely forage everywhere, not just in designated areas, or they will forage protected species. I don't believe that DNR is funded well enough to enforce these things.
- **Contradiction with existing principles:** Maryland asks visitors to follow "Leave No Trace" guidelines. A foraging program directly undermines this message.

The Broader Problem

Additionally, the bill's funding mechanism is flawed. Edible forests are funded by foraging permit revenue, but foraging on natural lands poses serious risks to habitats and visitors. If the foraging component is restricted enough to be safe, it likely won't generate enough revenue to sustain the edible forest program. The bill's structure doesn't work.

If edible forests are going to exist on state land despite these issues, they should at minimum be limited to previously disturbed areas (turf, old agricultural fields, abandoned lots) in urban and suburban locations, and they should use exclusively native species.

Thank you for your consideration,

Ellen Marcus
Maryland 20912

SB 667 testimony LMcD 2026.pdf

Uploaded by: Liz McDowell

Position: UNF

Testimony: SB 667, Natural Resources – Edible Forests and Foraging Program - Establishment
Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment
Hearing Date: February 17, 2026
Position: OPPOSE

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Honorable Members of the Committee:

On first glance Senate Bill 667 seems like a good idea, but I urge you to take a closer look and then oppose this bill, because most certainly the 'devil is in the details'.

I support the creation of edible forests (aka permaculture orchards) on State lands that are not functioning as natural ecosystems. Abandoned farm land or land abused from previous uses would be an ideal place to plant NATIVE trees and shrubs that will produce nuts and fruits for local people to harvest. However, this bill does not clarify where on State land edible forests should be created, potentially allowing natural habitats to be destroyed. This bill also allows the use of non-natives which as history has taught us may ultimately become invasive. For example, garlic mustard (introduced as a cooking herb in New York in 1868) has now spread to 34 states, killing a globally rare butterfly and reducing forest regeneration and growth.¹ Many seemingly benign non-native species have in time become invasive, costing our country over \$120 billion annually in damage and control efforts, as well as harming our natural heritage.²

Even of more concern is establishing a foraging program in Maryland's State Parks & Forests, when there is no practical way for DNR to prevent over-harvesting. Even if DNR were not already understaffed, they could not possibly monitor and regulate foraging in designated areas. Few DNR staff are trained botanists, a crucial skill for overseeing any foraging program. Every ecoregion of our State has many different species that would need to be covered in any course required by DNR for a foraging permit. As a retired environmental educator, I can assure you that this will not be an easy task.

In addition, if the roots and tubers of plants such as Indian Cucumber are targeted for foraging (as stated in this bill), those species would quickly be eliminated from easily accessible areas. The sad outcome is that visitors accustomed to walking on trails in Maryland's Parks & Forests for a glimpse of unique fauna, flora, and fungi will only witness areas denuded of these natural treasures as a result of foraging activities.

If this bill simply allowed for the creation of 'edible forests' (aka permaculture orchards) on abused or abandoned State lands using NATIVE species that would be fine, but it does not do that. Instead it encourages the planting of non-native species on State lands, and establishes a foraging program on DNR lands (our Parks & Forests) that is neither sustainable nor enforceable.

As a Maryland park naturalist in the 80's I was taught to emphasize the 'Leave No Trace' ethic. I explained to visitors that DNR Parks and Forests are natural treasures to be enjoyed by all. When visiting Maryland's natural areas let's continue to "take only photos; leave only footprints". **Please vote NO on Senate Bill 667.**

Respectfully,

Liz McDowell
90 Moonridge Lane
Grantsville, MD 21536
301-895-3686

¹ <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/6727dc893768d62b217ee6fd/t/67330abfa966b65917a6297b/1731398342077/Garlic-Mustard-Fact-Sheet-Blue-Ridge-PRISM.pdf>

² <https://www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/united-states/maryland-dc/stories-in-maryland-dc/maryland-invasive-species-taking-on-the-invaders-of-maryland/>

SB 667 testimony RCB 2026.pdf

Uploaded by: Ronald Boyer

Position: UNF

Testimony: SB 667, Natural Resources – Edible Forests and Foraging Program - Establishment
Committee: Environment and Transportation
Hearing Date: February 17, 2026
Position: OPPOSE

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Honorable Members of the Committee:

In a time of budgetary shortfalls, requiring DNR to design, establish, monitor, and enforce a new program is too much to ask. In addition, there are other ecological and litigious concerns with this bill. As such I ask that you oppose SB 667.

The suggestion of using non-native plants to create “edible forests” has proven disastrous in the past. Think - bamboo and wineberry. Edible forests created on State lands should only contain species that are native to Maryland.

Establishing a foraging program on DNR lands, such as State Forests and Parks, has many potential problems. Removing the tubers and roots of a plant destroys it. Harvesting fruits and nuts has an impact, since it slows regenerative processes and removes potentially helpful genetic material. Identifying Rare, Threatened or Endangered plants in a region is critical so that they are not foraged. Nature has had a balanced system in place for millions of years that works and deserves to be preserved in our protected public lands.

Lastly, there is a litigious concern. According to the NIH, there have been 133,700 cases of mushroom exposure from 1999-2016 resulting in 52 deaths and 704 cases of major harm.¹ These numbers reflect an increasing number of children and more importantly in regards to this bill, an increasing number of foragers. Should the State promote and sanction an activity that potentially opens the door for increased litigation?

In summary, I ask that you vote NO on Senate Bill 667 for all the reasons stated above.

Respectfully,

Ronald Boyer
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301-895-3686

¹ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30062915/>