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Health and Government Operations
Committee

Subcommittees

Public Health and
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Health Occupations and
Long-Term Care

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony

HB 949 Agriculture – Noxious Weeds – Palmer Amaranth

Environment and Transportation Committee

02/27/2026

What This Bill Does

HB949 focuses on the containment and elimination of the invasive species Palmer amaranth. Under this act, the Department of Agriculture is mandated to issue a formal eradication order to any landowner—public or private—upon the discovery of the weed on their property. Once an order is issued, the landowner is legally required to eradicate the plant within a strict two-week window. To ensure compliance and prevent regrowth, the Department is further required to conduct follow-up inspections every two weeks until they officially determine the infestation has been cleared. The bill also establishes a structured fine system, ranging from \$500 to \$2,000 for repeat violations, with all collected penalties being diverted into a specialized fund dedicated to noxious weed control.

Why We Need This Bill

The necessity of this bill stems from the fact that Palmer amaranth is significantly more aggressive than other listed noxious weeds, such as Johnsongrass or Thistles, making current slow-acting regulations ineffective. Palmer amaranth severely impacts farmers by causing massive yield losses (up to 91% in corn and 79% in soybeans) due to its rapid growth of up to 3 inches per day, ability to shade out crops, and resistance to multiple herbicide modes of action. Palmer amaranth's unique makeup allows it to move from the bud stage to seed production in as little as 40 days, with a single plant capable of producing up to 500,000 seeds. It has developed a high resistance to Glyphosate products, a standard warning notice often comes too late to prevent an infestation.

This bill is essential because it ensures that landowners are not penalized by the poor Integrated Pest Management practices of a neighbor or the accidental introduction of seeds through contaminated machinery and organic fertilizers. Without this expedited timeline, the weed can easily spread across the Eastern Shore and the rest of Maryland through wildlife, weather, and farm equipment, potentially costing the agricultural community thousands of dollars per acre in lost yields and eradication expenses. This legislation provides the Department of Agriculture with the specific authority needed to stop this "super-weed" before it causes permanent damage to the state's farmland and economic stability.

I respectfully ask the Committee for a favorable vote on **HB949**.