

**BENJAMIN BROOKS**  
*Legislative District 10*  
Baltimore County

Education, Energy, and the  
Environment Committee  
Energy Subcommittee

Chair, Joint Electric Universal  
Service Program Workgroup



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**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 266**  
**Local Government – Regulatory Powers- Regulation of Tree of Heaven**  
Environment and Transportation Committee  
April 1, 2026

**Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and Members of the Committee:**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you on SB 266 Local Government - Regulatory Powers - Regulation of Tree of Heaven and trees on the Maryland Department of Agriculture's Prohibited Invasive Plant List. This bill, as amended, would allow counties and municipalities to: 1) ban the sale and planting of invasive plants; 2) ban people from allowing invasive plants to grow on their property; 3) establish a civil fine to enforce invasive tree ordinances; and 4) establish a bounty or native tree replacement program for invasive trees.

In 2024, the General Assembly enacted legislation establishing the official Prohibited Invasive Plant List. The listed trees are harmful to human health or Maryland's ecological landscape, environment, or economy. SB 266 builds on the General Assembly's previous work regarding invasive plants by providing local governments with the authority to enforce invasive tree regulations and removal.

Invasive trees can harm Maryland's ecosystem by crowding out native plants, reducing biodiversity and disrupting ecosystems. The tree of heaven illustrates the harm invasive trees can inflict on Maryland. This species spreads quickly and secretes toxic chemicals into the soil that kill surrounding vegetation. It also serves as the preferred habitat of the spotted lanternfly, another invasive species that harms Maryland's agricultural industry.

The General Assembly must act to allow local governments to ban invasive trees, protecting our state's ecosystems, agricultural industry, and economy.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on SB 266.

With kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Benjamin T. Brooks".

Benjamin Brooks