

SB0164_DNR_SUP_ENT_4-1-26.pdf

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Position: FAV



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

April 1, 2026

BILL NUMBER: SENATE BILL 164 – THIRD 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.

Contact: Lydia McPherson, Director, Legislative and Constituent Services
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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.

SB 164 - MDLCV FAV_ TreeMendous Maryland Program A

Uploaded by: Marisa Olszewski

Position: FAV



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April 01, 2026

SUPPORT: Natural Resources - Pamela J. Kelly Tree-Mendous Maryland Program - Alterations

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Maryland LCV supports SB 164 Natural Resources - Pamela J. Kelly Tree-Mendous Maryland Program - Alterations. We thank the Department of Natural Resources for this legislation to improve natural resource management in Maryland.

Maryland LCV has long supported efforts to preserve, expand, and support the health and resilience of our forests and tree canopies statewide.

SB 164 will allow the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to expand the allowable uses of funds within the Pamela J. Kelly Tree-Mendous Maryland program to support maintenance, education, and other relevant activities under the umbrella of community forestry. Property and land managers often express a need for financial assistance with maintenance of trees, not just support for their planting. Adding this flexibility to the program with this legislation will enable DNR to better respond to on-the-ground needs across the state. This program amendment will better support community members across Maryland in maintaining healthy forest and trees on public lands and open spaces, which, in turn, offers tremendous benefits for health, air quality, and climate resilience.

By updating the Tree-Mendous program in this way, DNR is demonstrating responsiveness and effective stewardship of public resources. SB 164 will ensure this successful and widely supported program delivers greater, lasting benefits for Maryland's forest, trees, and communities.

Maryland LCV respectfully requests a favorable report on this bill.

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SB 164 Tree-Mendous Maryland Program Alterations (

Uploaded by: Michelle Dietz

Position: FAV

Wednesday, April 1, 2026

TO: Delegate Marc Korman, Chair of the House Environment and Transportation Committee, and Committee Members

FROM: Humna Sharif, Climate Adaptation Manager, The Nature Conservancy; Cait Kerr, State Policy Manager, The Nature Conservancy,

POSITION: Support SB164 Natural Resources - Pamela J. Kelly Tree-Mendous Maryland Program - Alterations

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) supports SB164 offered by the Department of Natural Resources and sponsored by Chair Feldman. TNC is a global conservation organization working to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. In Maryland, our work focuses on delivering data-driven, on-the-ground solutions that secure clean water, air, and healthy, secure living environments for our human and natural communities today and in the generations to come.

The Tree-mendous Maryland Program is vital for helping Marylanders restore tree cover in the state. More than 3000 towns communities and parks in the state have benefitted from the program. Tree-mendous Maryland's goal is to help Maryland residents have access to affordable trees to plant on their public lands. With permission from landowners, volunteers can plant trees at schools, in state and community parks, local open space, street trees and more.¹

While the program currently supports tree plantings, SB164 will improve its implementation by providing DNR the ability to use program resources for maintenance of native trees and shrubs on public lands.

TNC commends Chair Feldman and DNR on introducing this bill. SB164 will promote forest health and resilience in the state long term. **Therefore, we urge a favorable report on SB164.**

¹ <https://dnr.maryland.gov/forests/pages/treemendous/default.aspx>

SB164.FAVORABLE.ShoreRivers.pdf

Uploaded by: Zack Kelleher

Position: FAV



Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 164 – Natural Resources -Pamela J. Kelly Tree-Mendous Maryland Program - Alterations

April 1, 2026

Dear Chairman Korman,

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in **SUPPORT** of **SB164** 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 **strengthens the Pamela J. Kelly Tree-Mendous Maryland Program by expanding its purpose to include the advancement of forest health and resilience through the promotion and maintenance of native trees and shrubs on public lands, community spaces, schools, and rights-of-way.** Forests and tree canopy are essential natural infrastructure for clean water and healthy communities. Trees absorb stormwater, reduce runoff pollution, filter airborne pollutants, and provide critical habitat for wildlife. For communities throughout the Eastern Shore and Chesapeake Bay watershed, expanding tree planting and maintenance efforts is a **proven, cost-effective strategy to improve water quality and resilience to climate impacts** such as erosion and increasingly-severe weather events.

ShoreRivers' on-the-ground restoration efforts consistently demonstrate that projects incorporating trees yield measurable water quality improvements and community benefits. ShoreRivers works with volunteers, students, landowners, and municipalities on tree planting and watershed stewardship initiatives throughout our region. We regularly see firsthand how access to healthy, native plantings engages citizens in environmental action and enhances local landscapes. Unfortunately, a major challenge to the continued success of these restoration projects is the lack of available funding for maintenance activities to ensure that these plantings are effective beyond the term of the grant funding used to install them. **By broadening the existing Tree-Mendous program's purpose to explicitly include resilience and maintenance, SB164 aligns program priorities with community needs and environmental changes.** It builds upon an already successful statewide initiative and creates a stronger foundation for interagency partnerships, community engagement, and long-term ecological success.

For these reasons, ShoreRivers **urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 164** and encourages the legislature to support policies that invest in tree canopy, 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