



**Maryland**  
**Department of Agriculture**  
*Office of the Secretary*

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Agriculture | *Maryland's Leading Industry*  
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**Maryland Department of Agriculture**  
**Legislative Comment**  
**Date:** March 17th, 2026

**BILL NUMBER:** HB 217  
**BILL TITLE:** General Provisions - Commemorative Month - Maryland Native Plant Month  
**MDA POSITION:** SUPPORT

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The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) respectfully submits this letter in support of *House Bill 217 - General Provisions - Commemorative Month - Maryland Native Plant Month*. This legislation aligns with the Department's ongoing commitment to ecological stewardship and the economic vitality of Maryland's nursery and horticultural industries.

The MDA Native Plants Program has been at the forefront of promoting the use of indigenous species to bolster biodiversity and climate resilience across the state. Our program has worked diligently to bridge the gap between conservation goals and market availability. By providing technical assistance to nursery growers and implementing the "Maryland Native" plant labeling initiative, we have empowered consumers to make informed choices that support local ecosystems while driving demand for Maryland-grown products.

HB 217 further strengthens these efforts by expanding market access for specialized nursery producers through the prioritization of native species in public landscaping projects. By creating a stable and predictable demand within state and local jurisdictions, the legislation ensures that Maryland's greenhouse industry—a major contributor to our agricultural economy—remains a regional leader in this high-growth sector. This framework positions Maryland to capitalize on the economic potential of the green industry while simultaneously meeting our state's ambitious biodiversity and climate resilience goals.

The collaborative framework established by the MDA Native Plants Program demonstrates that environmental protection and economic development are not mutually exclusive. HB 217 codifies this success and provides the necessary statutory support to ensure that Maryland's native plant industry remains robust and competitive. For these reasons, the Maryland Department of Agriculture urges a favorable report on HB 217.

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