



Maryland Native Plant Society

APPRECIATION CONSERVATION EDUCATION

Testimony: HB217, General Provisions - Commemorative Month - Maryland Native Plant Month
Committee: Government, Labor, and Elections
Hearing Date: March 17, 2026
Position: FAVORABLE

Chair Wells, Vice Chair Kerr, and honorable members of the Committee:

The Maryland Native Plant Society (MNPS) supports HB217, which requires the Governor to proclaim May as Maryland Native Plant Month each year. We urge the committee to provide a favorable report on the bill.

A commemorative month will continue the momentum of the new [Maryland Native Plants Program](#). One of the achievements of this program, thus far, is the [Maryland Native Plant Guide Piedmont Region](#), the first in a series of three books, which makes native plants far more accessible to Maryland gardeners.

Commemorating May as Maryland Native Plant Month will bring attention to native plants at precisely the time when most spring plants are purchased. A regular native plant month, in addition to the new [Maryland's Best Native Plants](#) certification and marketing program, will boost the state's still-developing native plant industry by helping new and existing native plant growers plan for and expand their operations. In addition, it will encourage retailers to stock more and buyers to purchase more native plants.

There are also large-scale economic reasons to support native plants via a commemorative month. Over half of the global economy is moderately to highly dependent on nature.¹ Yet our ecosystems are being rapidly depleted, with an average depletion in wildlife populations of 69% in the past 54 years.² A cocktail of stresses is causing this devastation: land use change, climate change, invasive species, pollution, and direct exploitation.³ Protecting and promoting native plants is key to solving this crisis, as they have developed mutually beneficial relationships with other native creatures over millennia, making them more resilient to stress.

MNPS is a vibrant society of over 1400 members. Our membership supports this bill from a broad range of perspectives. We have landscapers and nursery owners who would benefit economically from being able to plan for a regular month celebrating native plants. Furthermore, much of our membership is fascinated by rare and endangered plants. Some of our members are generalists who enjoy all of nature, from plants to birds to fireflies to fungi. Many of us are native plant gardeners. Protecting and promoting our

¹ <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2023/02/an-ecosystems-economic-value-can-now-be-measured-heres-how/>

² <https://livingplanet.panda.org/en-US/>

³ <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/five-drivers-nature-crisis>

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native plants would satisfy all these groups.

Creating a commemorative Maryland Native Plant Month will support Maryland businesses through an extremely low-cost measure, while doing the right thing for the future of humanity and wildlife.

Respectfully,

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