

## **HB0217 - SUPPORT**

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### **HB0217 - General Provisions - Commemorative Month - Maryland Native Plant Month**

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Dear Chair Wells, Vice Chair Kerr, and Members of the Government, Labor, and Elections Committee,

As a longtime Maryland resident and volunteer with the Chesapeake Climate Action Network (CCAN), I urge a favorable report on HB0217/SB0229 to support native plants in Maryland.

My front yard is alive with bees and butterflies. My pandemic project was to yank out invasive plants that wipe out native habitat and replace them with beautiful, hardy native plants that pollinators feast on and that bring joy to everyone who passes by.

This life-giving transformation was NOT helped by Maryland nurseries and garden centers. When I visited garden centers that were very reputable, I noticed more invasive plants for sale than natives. Native plants were often off the main paths and incorrectly labelled, and it was hard to find staff members who could answer basic questions about them. A master gardener working at beloved Homestead Gardens quietly directed me away from their centers and referred me to others that only sold native plants. That's sad!

More and more people are learning how essential pollinators are and the difference individuals can make by planting native plants in their own yards. I would like the Maryland nursery industry to lead in this transformation and to benefit from the business it brings.

A permanent Native Plant Month every May will highlight the importance of planting native plants that help protect the Chesapeake Bay, improve agricultural yields with higher crop pollination, and help protect our wildlife, including pollinators. This bipartisan bill will energize the nursery trade while delivering measurable environmental benefits that help food production and wildlife at zero cost to taxpayers. Please support the commemoration of May as Maryland Native Plant Month.

Thank you,  
Susy Cheston