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Environment and Transportation
Committee

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The Maryland House of Delegates
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The Maryland House of Delegates

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Delegate Stein's Testimony in Support of House Bill 217

General Provisions – Commemorative Month-Maryland Native Plant Month

Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and Fellow Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of HB 217, Commemorative Month – Maryland Native Plant Month. The purpose of this bill is to designate May as Native Plant Month.

While this bill designates a commemorative month, its purpose is far more substantive than recognition alone. HB 217 creates an opportunity to educate Marylanders about the environmental, agricultural, and economic benefits of native plants and the role they play in the health of our state's ecosystems.

In 2023, the General Assembly enacted legislation establishing the State's Native Plant Program, recognizing the ecological and environmental value of incorporating native plants into landscaping, conservation, and restoration efforts. Since that time, the Governor has also designated May as Native Plant Month through executive order, helping to raise awareness about the importance of native plants and their role in supporting Maryland's ecosystems. HB 217 builds upon those efforts by establishing this recognition in statute, ensuring that this important focus on education and awareness becomes a lasting commitment.

Native plants are uniquely adapted to Maryland's climate, soils, and wildlife. Because of this, they require less water, fewer chemical inputs, and less maintenance than non-native species. For homeowners, municipalities, and land managers, that means reduced landscaping costs and more sustainable land management practices.

Native plants are also foundational to Maryland's agricultural and natural resource economy. They support pollinators such as bees, butterflies, and other beneficial insects that are essential to crop production. Without healthy pollinator populations, many of the crops grown across Maryland would face significant challenges.

Beyond agriculture, native plants strengthen biodiversity, improve soil health, help manage stormwater, and contribute to the restoration of critical habitats throughout our state. As Maryland continues to address environmental challenges, including climate resilience and water quality, the use of native plants is an important, practical tool.

This bill also supports education and community engagement. A designated Native Plant Month provides a platform for schools, local governments, conservation groups, nurseries, and garden centers to highlight the value of native plants and encourage Marylanders to incorporate them into landscapes, parks, and restoration projects.

In doing so, HB 217 can help expand demand for native plants, supporting local nurseries and growers while advancing Maryland's environmental goals.

For these reasons, HB 217 is more than a symbolic designation. It is a simple but meaningful step toward strengthening environmental stewardship, supporting agriculture, and raising awareness about the natural resources that sustain our state.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask for a favorable report on House Bill 217.