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Halten Garden Club

HB0217 "MD Native Plant Month Act"  
March 17, 2026  
Government, Labor and Elections Committee  
Favorable

Dear Chair Delegate Melissa Wells and Members of the Committee,

As a Baltimore County Master Gardener (BCMG), a Garden Club of America (GCA) Conservation Co-Chair, Immediate Past GCA Zone VI (MD and DC) Conservation and National Affairs and Legislation Representative, member of Federated Garden Clubs of MD and lifelong gardener, I strongly urge you to vote Favorably for HB0217.

HB0217 is important both because it would designate every May as MD Native Plant month, which will put **continual and repeated focus on the use of native plants** in our landscape and because it is **good for our economy**. On the one hand, money is generated by sales and growing natives, and keeping this circular loop in state. It will financially benefit recreational activities. And then there is the untold amount of savings to Marylanders by using natives to fight stormwater issues, food production, supporting wildlife (ecological services benefits) versus if we do nothing to add more to our landscape and incur these currently unseen costs.

If we make every May "MD Native Plant Month" we give nurseries the reliability to prepare each year when growing and ordering plants, to be ready with enough stock and signage for consumers. Furthermore, more of the public is learning about and asking for native plants and, in my opinion, would benefit from this annual 'reminder' as they come to fully understand, appreciate and choose native plants as much as possible.

For the past few years dedicated Marylanders have worked hard to file a Proclamation with Governor Wes Moore to make a Native Plant Month. But by making permanent public recognition of the benefits of choosing native plants, we can now build on prior MD legislation such as the Maryland Native Program and law on Invasive plants. Eleven other states already have a Native Plant Month; it costs Maryland taxpayers nothing to support HB0217.

**The need to focus on native plants is urgent.** Native Plants support native wildlife, which is critical not only to food production (pollination) but to resiliency from climate change's new norms such as extended drought and storm water management. For example, native grasses have roots that extend up to several feet below ground to anchor soil in flood conditions. During drought in my gardens, it was the native plants that fared well. Wildlife depends on native food sources; they literally cannot digest much of the exotic vegetation that abounds.

Homeowners/privately owned land is where our citizens may choose to make a difference for the future. If everyone planted native species, we could possibly make a dent in lost and fragmented habitat and feel like we are doing something to save Nature. When I volunteer for MG and meet young families with children, I see this heartache for a dismal future and the urge to enthusiastically do right by our environment.

Thank you for a favorable vote and for your service to Maryland and its future.

Meredith McDonagh, Conservation Co-Chair