



TESTIMONY FOR HB 0217

Commemorative Month – Maryland Native Plant Month

Government, Labor and Elections Committee

FAVORABLE

TO: Delegate Melissa Wells, Chair; Delegate Kenneth Kerr, Vice-Chair; and the Members of the House Government, Labor and Elections Committee

FROM: Patrick Crump, member of the Maryland Episcopal Public Policy Network

DATE: March 13, 2026

The Episcopal Church along with many other faith communities endorses responsible stewardship of God's creation. Our faith teaches us that all creation is interconnected, and the health of our environment directly impacts the well-being of our communities. The Church's 81st General Convention endorsed the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and seeks to support it on church properties by prioritizing native plant species to reduce irrigation needs and encourage pollinators, and by transforming open grass lawns into native plant meadows.

It is vitally important that Marylanders understand the important role that native plants play in supporting the natural food web, linking insects, birds, plants, animals and humans, with each element playing a role in protecting, sustaining, and growing a balanced, nurturing environment for all.

To illustrate the symbiotic relationship between many insects and plants, adult moths lay eggs on the native plant that historically has been a host to that moth species. The hatched and developing larvae (caterpillars) are able to eat the leaves, develop, survive, and grow into adulthood, to then repeat the cycle. When native plants are replaced with non-natives, these take over the space and use the nutrients to the detriment of the natives. If eggs are laid on a non-native plant, the hatchlings will starve and die. No caterpillars mean no food for nesting/fledging birds, who will starve to death. This is already widely apparent in the sharp decline in numbers of bird populations.

Native plants have long been valued by gardeners. The Maryland Native Plant Month bill serves the valuable purpose of advancing public awareness of the essential role these plants play in sustaining our environment.

The Maryland Episcopal Public Policy Network requests a FAVORABLE report.