

November 28th, 2023

Written testimony for Bill 40-23, Tree Canopy and Roadside Tree Requirements
– Fee Revisions.¹

Dear Montgomery County Council,

Nature Forward is the oldest independent environmental organization in the DC metro region. Our mission is to inspire residents of the greater Washington, DC, region to appreciate, understand, and protect their natural environment through outdoor experiences, education, and advocacy. We thank the County Council for the opportunity to provide testimony on Bill 40-23 which seeks to update the county's current tree planting fee to \$450 per tree which more accurately aligns with the current cost of planting a tree in the county plus takes into consideration future inflation increases. This fee has not been raised in 10 years, the time to raise the tree planting fee is now and should not be delayed anymore.

Earlier this year the Montgomery County Council updated and unanimously approved the updated Bill 25-22E – Forest Conservation Trees² which expanded protections to priority forests, increased replanting ratios, aligned with the MD state's recent forest law updates, and made technical clarifications.³ This was a great step forward towards the protection of forests in the county (along with the state's forest conservation law updates). It is also one which aligns with the Hughes Center Report on Maryland's Forests found that, "Montgomery and Prince George's counties accounted for more than 44% of the state's total tree canopy loss."⁴ Forests and trees are critical natural infrastructure that purify our air, water, reduce urban heat, serve as habitats for wildlife, reduce stormwater run-off, reduce stress levels, connect communities, and more. On behalf of Nature Forward and our 28,000 members and supporters, we recommend that the County Council supports moves forward now on Bill 40-23 and does not delay any more.

Sincerely,

Denisse Guitarra, MD Conservation Advocate at Nature Forward

Debra Street, Conservation Volunteer at Nature Forward

¹ Bill 40-23, Tree Canopy and Roadside Tree Requirements – Fee Revisions. Available at: https://montgomerycountymd.granicus.com/Viewer.php?view_id=169&event_id=15959&meta_id=166986

² Bill 25-22E – Forest Conservation Trees. Available at: https://apps.montgomerycountymd.gov/ccllms/DownloadFilePage?FileName=2766_1_24907_Bill_25-22E_Signed_20230403.pdf

³ Maryland & Montgomery County Forest Wins. Nature Forward. May 2023. <https://natureforward.org/maryland-montgomery-county-forest-wins/>

⁴ Maryland Forest Technical Study. Nov 2022. Available at: <https://www.chesapeakeconservancy.org/mdforeststudy2022>

