

**From:** Barry Louis Polisar

**Sent:** Monday, June 23, 2025 10:22 PM

**To:** Glass's Office, Councilmember

**Subject:** submitting testimony re: house bill 18-25

Dear Council Member Glass,

I'd like to ask that this email be considered as written testimony and respectfully request that it be added to the public record for the July 8th public hearing.

I have lived and worked in Montgomery County for over fifty years and have been able to acquire several properties with acreage in the county which had been neglected and severely abused. I have spent a considerable amount of time cleaning these properties of old dump sites and trash and have taken it upon myself to remove accumulated trash in the creeks and coves adjacent to our property alongside the Patuxent River, which provides drinking water for many County residents.

You can read about just a few of my efforts here: <https://barrylou.com/tireless-efforts/>

Here: <https://barrylou.com/talkin-trash-my-personal-river-clean-up/>

And here: <https://barrylou.com/another-worthy-project/>

I take a serious interest in the environment and have tried to be a good steward on our properties; improving the forest through permanent conservation easements, forest conservation plans, and soil conservation practices that involve planting trees, replacing invasive plants with native plantings, and removing destructive vines and invasive brush that impede the growth of native trees and plants.

I have recently learned that the County Council is considering Bill 18-25 that might potentially change the definition of "tree" in the County Code as a "woody plant" measuring at least one inch in diameter. If this is true, this broad definition will interfere with landowners' efforts at controlling invasive plants and will create major obstacles for those of us who want to be good stewards and follow recommended land practices.

As I understand it, the intent of this proposed forest conservation law is to apply conservation standards when there will be an impending change in land use (e.g. when a land-owner wishes to convert forest and farmland to development). But management of woodland and agricultural land is not the same thing as conversion of land to a developed use.

The proposed changes in designation as to what should be classified as a tree sounds overly broad, making it nearly impossible to control the spread of unwanted invasive vegetation. The County's Forest Conservation law is already more restrictive than State law—and if I understand this bill correctly, it might make it even harder for landowners to conscientiously manage and control the invasives on their land.

I have worked with both my State Forester at the Department of Natural Resources and staff members of the Montgomery County Soil Conservation District. These are the people who should be advising landowners of proper practices, as is typical in other counties in Maryland.

I am not talking about developing and destroying woodlands and farmlands for development. There should be exemptions for controlling vegetation on land zoned and/or assessed for agriculture and forests and should not require landowners to have their conservation efforts submitted and approved by the Maryland National Capital Park Planning Commission when the land management practice is under the guidance and supervision of the Montgomery soil conservation District.

The County should encourage landowners to follow best practices to properly manage their land, following the advice and recommendations of the State foresters at Maryland's Department of Natural Resources and Montgomery County's own Soil Conservation District.

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