



AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

June 25, 2025

Kate Stewart, President
Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Avenue,
Rockville, MD 20850

Subject: Bill 18-25, Forest Conservation – Trees

Dear Council President Stewart:

The Montgomery County Agricultural Advisory Committee would like to submit written testimony for Bill 18-25, Forest Conservation – Trees and requests that it be entered into the public record for the July 8, 2025 public hearing.

This committee has concerns with one element of this bill, specifically the proposed amendment to the definition of “tree”. Establishing one inch as the threshold diameter in this definition would have significant impacts for agricultural operations.

This definition would subject a large amount of woody vegetation that grows on farms to rigorous forest conservation requirements. Farmers and landowners need the ability to manage vegetation, especially invasive plants, to properly maintain fences, field edges, and other areas. Invasive plants are non-native plants that aggressively compete with native plants and often dominate certain environments.

Woody shrubs quickly attain a diameter of one inch and can grow in areas that are temporarily uncropped due to erosion or other circumstances. Restoring eroded areas according to a best management practice, with guidance from the Montgomery Soil Conservation District, often requires first removing the volunteer vegetation. Requiring compliance with or an exemption from forest conservation requirements for this removal would hinder landowners’ efforts to restore eroded areas using the recommended practices in a timely and practical manner.

Farmers can attest that obtaining an agricultural exemption from forest conservation requirements is not a straightforward matter and places unnecessary burdens on operators for attempting to maintain their agricultural properties in working order.



Thank you for considering these important points as you address this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lori Larson". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Lori" and last name "Larson" clearly legible.

Lori Larson, Chair