

To the President and members of the Montgomery County Council,

Thank you so much for allowing me to offer my testimony at today's hearing.

I am very pleased to speak in strong support of Councilmember Evan Glass's Native Plant Protection Act consisting of two parts: the Native Plant Protection Zoning Amendment and the Invasive Bamboo Ban.

I have been a County Weed Warrior for over 20 years and was present at Councilmember Glass's recent recognition of that effective program. Although this army of dedicated county residents has been "at it" for many years, the battle rages on against English Ivy, Oriental Bittersweet, Garlic Mustard, Porcelainberry, and other non-native invasives that endanger our native flora and fauna.

I have been a great advocate and supporter of native plantings, but it is only recently that I have changed my own garden to become more pollinator-friendly. From excellent programs offered by our own Brookside Gardens and the US Botanical Garden, I learned that pollinators require at least 3-season plantings of diverse native plants to survive. Given the dire state of the world's bee population, it is critical that we support bees and the flora that feed them. I now grow a greater variety of natives and am eager to introduce more. This was a very simple decision, but a profound and conscious change – much like this Act is on a wider level. There is nothing complicated about this. It hurts no one and only helps our native wildlife survive.

Actually, my view has evolved into seeing any empty space and those spaces filled with non-natives as a so-called 'crime against nature.' Open and green spaces are critical for all us – humans and wildlife alike – and I would love to see more - if not all of them - filled with native plantings.

We can all agree that requiring developers to plant only native plants should not pose any problems to business. Instead of edging sidewalks or yards with English ivy or pachysandra or periwinkle, simply offer native options such as Northern Lady Fern, Allegheny Spurge, or Creeping Phlox or other natives - options shown on the County's website and publications. Plant native trees and substitute as much native ground cover instead of supporting the crazy and harmful and chemical-laden lawns that serve no purpose and are the "empty calories" of landscaping.

The ban on bamboo makes a lot of sense. It spreads with lightning speed and is virtually impossible to destroy. It is known to damage infrastructures such as pipes and should be reserved for the one species that eats it: the Great Panda...in China...far from Montgomery County!

This bill is simple and straightforward and I strongly support it: expand the use of native plants that protect local wildlife and limit those that strangle and kill it and harm homeowners' and county infrastructure. It is a very simple and doable and effective "no-brainer!"

Thank you,  
Eva Santorini (Silver Spring, MD 20910)