

Montgomery County Bill 26-25 – Native Plant Protection Act

Testimony in SUPPORT

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The Native Plant Protection Act introduced by Councilmember Glass is an outstanding and forward-thinking piece of legislation that will positively impact our region's biodiversity, ecosystem services, and climate resilience.

I am a student biologist from Somerset, MD who is beginning a PhD in biology this coming fall. Having been profoundly interested in nature from a young age, I have witnessed firsthand the proliferation of invasive species and decline of native biodiversity across our county. This has particularly been the case with insects and especially native bees, crucial providers of ecosystem services which are experiencing nationwide crashes in population. These species play key roles in pollination, agriculture, and the food web, and rely overwhelmingly on native plants for food, habitat, and shelter. In this vein, requiring a 50% minimum of native plants in all new development is an important step towards halting the biodiversity crisis. Study after study have also indicated that native species are superior in sequestering carbon, preventing erosion, and responding resiliently to changing local climate conditions. On top of this, they are also generally hardier and require less dedicated resources to grow. Overall, these plants are a no-brainer for developers and bring immense positive impact to our county.

Prohibiting the sale of running bamboo within the county is likewise an inspired idea. Having spent years fighting bamboo encroaching to my own yard from neighboring parkland, this species is invasive, noxious, and incredibly expensive for landowners. Bamboo chokes out native vegetation and supports almost no native insect or vertebrate species. However, the plant does serve as a host to the invasive Asian Tiger Mosquito *Aedes albopictus*, a voracious bloodsucker known to carry Yellow Fever, Zika, and Dengue, which breeds within bamboo. The literal clouds of mosquitos surrounding our neighborhood bamboo patch attest to its status as a nursery for this species. Its prohibition will be beneficial for public health and safety as well as our ecosystems.

As a student biologist and aspiring conservationist, this bill is a model of science-based policy and provides an excellent example for other jurisdictions to follow. It has my full support, and I hope the council will vote to approve it.