

Economic Impact Statement

Montgomery County, Maryland

Bill 26-25: Vegetation – Invasive Plants

Summary

The Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) anticipates that Bill 26-25 would have a minimal impact on economic conditions in the County, as measured by the Council's priority economic indicators. The Bill would prohibit the sale of invasive bamboo in the County and exempt native plants and grasses from weed removal requirements. Because OLO was unable to identify any impact evaluations that assess the economic effects of invasive bamboo bans, OLO interviewed representatives from a non-representative sample of four local garden centers to inquire about the anticipated economic impacts of the Bill.

While banning the sale of invasive bamboo would likely lead some plant retailers and related businesses to lose revenue, such losses could be small. The local garden centers interviewed reported that they do not offer invasive bamboo and have rarely lost business as a result of not carrying it. They noted that customers are generally willing to choose alternative plants.

Finally, eliminating weed removal requirements for native plants and grasses could reduce landscaping costs for some residents, whereas the ban on invasive bamboo sales may cause certain residents to spend more on alternatives.

Background and Purpose of Bill 26-25

In Montgomery County, bamboo is considered an invasive species. Invasive bamboo, due to their extremely fast growth and resilience, are difficult to contain and displace native plants. In Maryland, four main groups of bamboo species are considered invasive.¹

Native plants and grasses refer to plant species which occur naturally in a region.² Generally, native plants support local wildlife by providing food and shelter.³ They also can reduce environmental impacts associated with lawn care as native plants require less water and pesticides compared to lawns, prevent erosion by increasing the soil's capacity to store water and reduce runoff, reduce air pollution related to lawncare, and promote biodiversity.⁴

Bill 26-25 would prohibit the sale of invasive bamboo in the County and exempt native plants and grasses from weed removal requirements.⁵ The Bill is part of the *Native Plant Protection Act* which includes a zoning text amendment (ZTA) that would require all landscaping in new construction projects to include at least 50% of plants native to the Mid-Atlantic region.⁶

¹ ["Containing and Removing Bamboo", University of Maryland Extension, Accessed July 8, 2025.](#)

² ["Ornamental and Native Grasses for the Landscape", University of Maryland Extension, Accessed July 8, 2025.](#)

³ ["Why Native Plants Matter", Audubon Society, Accessed July 8, 2025.](#)

⁴ ["Native Gardening: Why Garden with Native Wildflowers?", U.S. Forest Service, Accessed July 8, 2025.](#)

⁵ [Introduction Staff Report for Bill 26-25, Vegetation - Invasive Plants, Montgomery County Council, Introduced June 17, 2025.](#)

⁶ ["Councilmember Evan Glass Introduces Native Plant Protection Act", Montgomery County Council Press Releases, June 17, 2025.](#)

The Council introduced Bill 26-25 on June 17, 2025.

Information Sources, Methodologies, and Assumptions

As required by 2-81B of the Montgomery County Code, this Economic Impact Statement evaluates the impacts of Bill 26-25 on residents and private organizations, using the Council's priority economic indicators as the measure. In doing so, it examines whether the Bill would have a net positive or negative impact on overall economic conditions in the County.⁷

OLO was unable to identify any impact evaluations that assess the economic effects of invasive bamboo bans. To gather evidence, OLO interviewed representatives from a non-representative sample of four local garden centers. The analyst first asked if the business carries invasive bamboo. When all reported that they do not, the analyst inquired whether not selling these products negatively affects their business—thus assessing whether the proposed ban could reduce overall sales or simply cause customers to purchase substitute plants instead. This approach was informed by the substitution effect. This refers to an economic principle which states that demand for a good with substitutes will shift toward those alternatives if the good becomes too expensive or unavailable. In contrast, a non-substitutable good is one where demand does not shift towards an alternative.⁸

Variables

The primary variables that would affect the economic impacts of enacting Bill 26-25 are the following:

- Number of businesses carrying invasive bamboo; and
- Consumer preferences for alternatives to invasive bamboo.

Impacts

WORKFORCE ▪ TAXATION POLICY ▪ PROPERTY VALUES ▪ INCOMES ▪ OPERATING COSTS ▪ PRIVATE SECTOR CAPITAL INVESTMENT ▪ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ▪ COMPETITIVENESS

Businesses, Non-Profits, Other Private Organizations

OLO anticipates that Bill 26-25 could have some negative impacts on certain private organizations in the County.

The Bill would primarily affect garden centers, big box stores, online retailers, and landscaping companies that currently sell invasive bamboo. A ban on selling invasive bamboo may cause them to lose some revenue from such sales. All else being equal, lower revenues would reduce net business income. However, the impact on these businesses would likely be marginal.

First, it is unclear how many businesses currently offer invasive bamboo. As previously stated, representatives from the four garden centers interviewed for this analysis indicated that none of the businesses carries invasive bamboo. They cited its harmful environmental effects as their reason. Although this is a small and non-random

⁷ Montgomery County Code, "[Sec. 2-81B, Economic Impact Statements](#)."

⁸ "Substitution Effect," ScienceDirect, accessed September 17, 2025, <https://www.sciencedirect-com.proxy.library.cornell.edu/topics/economics-econometrics-and-finance/substitution-effect>.

sample of local vendors, the finding suggests that selling invasive bamboo is unlikely essential to plant retailers' business models.

Second, for many customers, invasive bamboo appears to be a substitutable good. When asked whether not offering invasive bamboo negatively affects their business, only one representative reported occasionally losing customers who refused to purchase an alternative. Representatives from the other businesses said they do not recall ever losing business due to not carrying invasive bamboo.

Beyond these potential impacts, the Bill is unlikely to affect private organizations in terms of the other indicators prioritized by the Council.

Residents

OLO anticipates that Bill 26-25 could have mixed impacts on certain residents in the County.

The Bill would primarily affect property owners in the County. On the one hand, the elimination of weed removal requirements for native plants and grasses may reduce landscaping costs. On the other hand, the ban on invasive bamboo sales may cause certain residents to spend more on alternatives to bamboo.

Beyond these potential impacts, the Bill is unlikely to affect residents in terms of the other indicators prioritized by the Council.

Net Impact

OLO anticipates that Bill 26-25 would have a minimal impact on economic conditions in the County, as measured by the Council's priority economic indicators. The Bill would prohibit the sale of invasive bamboo in the County and exempt native plants and grasses from weed removal requirements. Because OLO was unable to identify any impact evaluations that assess the economic effects of invasive bamboo bans, OLO interviewed representatives from a non-representative sample of four local garden centers to inquire about the anticipated economic impacts of the Bill.

While banning the sale of invasive bamboo would likely lead some plant retailers and related businesses to lose revenue, such losses could be small. The local garden centers interviewed reported that they do not offer invasive bamboo and have rarely lost business as a result of not carrying it. They noted that customers are generally willing to choose alternative plants.

Finally, eliminating weed removal requirements for native plants and grasses could reduce landscaping costs for some residents, whereas the ban on invasive bamboo sales may cause certain residents to spend more on alternatives.

Discussion Items

Not applicable

Caveats

Two caveats to the economic impact analysis conducted here should be noted. First, predicting the economic impacts of legislation is a challenging analytical endeavor due to data limitations, the multitude of causes of economic outcomes, economic shocks, uncertainty, and other factors. Second, the analysis performed here is intended to *inform* the legislative process, not determine whether the Council should enact legislation. Thus, any conclusion made in this statement does not represent OLO's endorsement of, or objection to, the Bill under consideration.

Contributions

Stephen Roblin, PhD (OLO) prepared this report.