



HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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Delegate Kumar Barve, Chair
Environment and Transportation Committee
House Office Building, Room 251
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Testimony **IN SUPPORT** of House Bill 279 – Real Property – Restrictions on Use – Low Impact Landscaping

Dear Chairman Barve,

I appreciate the leadership of Delegates Hill and Feldmark for introducing House Bill 279, which would expand the ability of homeowners to make consciously low-impact landscaping decisions. This integrative landscaping will serve a critical ecological function as well as aesthetically enhance our community.

Early in my Administration, I signed onto the “*We Are Still In*” pledge – committing to the fight against climate change. Last year, Howard County also became the first county in the nation to formally accept the United States Climate Alliance’s Natural and Working Lands Challenge, which calls on jurisdictions to reduce emissions and increase carbon sequestration. We recognize that the natural systems upon which we depend are essential to life and critical for reducing the impacts of climate change on our communities and that these systems are under threat from human activity and climate change. In our region, meadows provide a critical habitat – specifically for our pollinators. Howard County also recently became a “Bee City USA” where we have committed to promoting pollinators and pollinator habitat. A piece of that project is promoting and supporting pollinator gardens as a functional and important part of residential landscaping.

An additional aspect of HB 279 would help curb stormwater runoff, which is the fastest growing source of pollution to the Chesapeake Bay. Howard County’s CleanScapes program works directly with homeowners to reimburse them for incorporating one or more of eight best management practices, including rain gardens and conservation landscaping. By using these best management practices, we are able to have them capture the stormwater runoff from the roof and hardscape during rain events. This, of course prevents erosion and nutrient pollution into nearby tributaries.

Many of the programs run by our Office of Sustainability are accepted and supported by Home Owners Associations (HOAs). In many cases they work to support similar projects on Association land and work to amend covenants to support these kinds of landscaping opportunities.

As we move towards low impact initiatives that will help create a more resilient future for our planet and generations yet unborn, I ask for your partnership and a favorable report on HB 279.

All the Best,

Calvin Ball
Howard County Executive