



House Bill 35

Local Government - Regulatory Powers - Regulation of Tree of Heaven

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Environment & Transportation Committee

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From: Dominic J. Butchko

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 35. This bill would provide additional powers to local jurisdictions for the regulation and control of the invasive Tree of Heaven.

As the preferred host plant for the ubiquitous Spotted Lanternfly, the Tree of Heaven presents a resounding threat to the health of Maryland's ecosystem. The Spotted Lanternfly is a well-documented invasive species that is wreaking havoc on agriculture and costing hundreds of millions in ecological damage across the nation. While counties respect homeowners' right to transform the landscape of their property within certain limits, it is critical that nonnative plant species be controlled from causing severe unintended consequences.

HB 35, builds from a similar framework for invasive bamboo established by the General Assembly in 2023, reinforcing commonsense tools whereby counties can regulate and penalize property owners for the unwelcome spread of invasive species.

HB 35 gives counties a necessary tool to control the unwelcome spread of the Tree of Heaven and with it, the Spotted Lanternfly. As such, MACo urges the Committee to issue a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 35.