

3.13.19 testimony for HB 59 - Ohio Native Plant Month -Ohio House State and Local Government Committee - Hope Taft

Mr. Chairman and Committee Members:

I have recently read in several places that plants need a voice. Invasive plants are pushing out native species and healthy ecosystems are under attack. Yet not much seems to be done to raise the alarm that native plants are the basic building blocks of our environments; therefore, our food supply.

It has come to a point that if we don't pay attention to the signs, such as decreases in pollinators and spring blossoms, it may soon be too late to fight back with a reasonable hope of success.

The Japanese honey suckle has already gotten beyond control, yet in 1989, when the book by E. Lucy Braun, "Woody Plants of Ohio", was published, it was only found in the wild in the Mt. Airy Forest in Hamilton County.

Now, 30 years later, it is impacting Ohio's native plants and wildlife in almost every county by obstructing light early and late in the growing season, changing the chemical composition of the soil and water around it and providing empty calories to birds and deer. It spreads rapidly because it has no natural predators to keep it in check.

You can help keep other examples like this from happening by passing HB59, April - Ohio Native Plant Month, so groups can educate the public on the need to use native plants and remove non-native invasive ones to help keep the state's biodiversity intact.

Although state departments are beginning to do their part, private citizens own most of Ohio land so efforts must be broad based. That is why the list of groups supporting HB 59 is long and diverse. They realize we need to act before the task is too overwhelming. They know 'plant blindness' or the ability to tell a plant that provides assets to the environment from one that doesn't is wide spread. Though education, we all can make wiser decisions.

Native plants need your voice to be loud and clear on their behalf. You can provide that encouragement for all citizens and groups to do what is best for our land and our future by passing HB59 out of committee and urging your colleagues to vote for its passage in the House.

Thank you for taking a leadership role. I will be happy to answer any questions