



Representative Scott Wiggam

1st House District

Chairman Hoagland, Ranking Member O'Brien, and members of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to offer sponsor testimony on House Bill 59. This legislation would make the month of April Ohio Native Plant Month.

The purpose of this legislation is to increase public awareness of Ohio's native plants and the many benefits native plants have on the health of Ohio's environment, including pollinators, and the potential benefit to Ohio's economy.

Establishing Ohio Native Plant Month would be beneficial to our economy in that it would give the nursery and landscaping industries a platform for increasing outreach and boosting sales. By building and leveraging public awareness through advertising and point-of-purchase displays, and by offering a greater selection of plants, Ohio businesses will have the opportunity to boost sales. Further, this bill would help increase the public awareness of Ohio's natural abundance of native plants will help ensure a strong and healthy ecosystem in Ohio. There are hundreds of native plant species in Ohio, and many are underutilized in the industry and by home gardeners. Many native plants offer beautiful and showy flowers, produce attractive fruits, seeds and seed pods, and display vibrant colors in the fall.

Finally, this legislation would conserve resources and protect the environment because native plants are adapted to local soils and environmental conditions, they generally require less water and little maintenance once established. This helps landscapers, nurseries and home gardeners conserve resources. For example, native oak trees have been shown to support over 550 different species of caterpillars, whereas non-native ginkgo trees host only 5 caterpillar species.

Pollinators are declining across the country including in the Midwest. Native plants provide abundant nectar for important pollinators including hummingbirds, native bees, butterflies, moths, and bats. Native plants are often far more beneficial to native insects since they have had thousands of years to co-adapt, allowing native insects to tolerate the unique chemical defenses of native plants. In short, most native insects cannot eat or digest non-native plants (Dr. Doug Tallamy, Entomology, University of Delaware). Native plants have found the natural ecological equilibrium that is often upset by foreign species. This means that native plants have the right balance of foragers and reproduction rates in order to help maintain a natural ecosystem.

Therefore, due to the many benefits of designating Ohio Native Plant Month would provide to pollinators, our economy, and the health of Ohio's environment, I respectfully ask for your support on House Bill 59. I would like to thank you all for your time and I am happy to answer any of your questions.