



Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and
Agriculture

In Support of S.563 and H.999, An Act responding to the threat of invasive species

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There are at least 66 invasive plant species on our lands and in our waterways. Unfortunately, a good many of them are sold by nurseries. This bill seeks to establish a comprehensive mechanism to deal with the threats to native species (including the fauna that feed on the flora) caused by the overrunning of land and filling of waterways with these invasives. Currently, there are essentially no rules about what technically is invasive, nor what can or should be done about them. And no penalties for violation of the very few regulations that do exist. This is a serious threat to our landscapes and waterways, being made worse by climate change. Failure to take action will, over time, have an adverse impact on our tourism and on local economies. Invasives are effectively a form of living pollution. That is true for both land-based and aquatic invasives, both of which are covered in this bill.

Having lived for a time in rural Virginia, where kudzu vine overruns just about everything, I have watched with horror as Japanese bittersweet and other invasives are making similar inroads in Massachusetts. Like a lot of environmentally-oriented citizens, I remove all the invasives from my own land and help local land trusts with projects to do the same. However, the lack of any broad policies governing sale of invasive plants or safe and effective removal techniques makes all this piecemeal effort less effective. When hiking on trails in the state, it is very easy to observe that almost any human disturbance to the land becomes an entry for invasive species, and it's getting harder to find undisturbed spaces. We need to develop policies that will mitigate this problem and provide for safe eradication.

The trust fund created by this bill will enable us to begin establishing good policy. It allows for conservation organizations, municipalities, or groups of municipalities to apply for grant funding, assuring that broad coalitions are able to work together on these growing problems. Currently the very limited state resources are spread across multiple agencies that don't always communicate well with each other, thus making it difficult for municipalities to get any help. In my own town, the overgrowth of aquatic invasive water chestnut vegetation on ponds has been an ongoing problem. We are fortunate to work together with other nearby towns, sharing equipment.

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that natural resources should be managed as interrelated parts of life-supporting ecosystems. Resources should be conserved and protected to assure their future availability. Invasive species overrun the natural environment and rapidly degrade our eco-systems. Recommending the creation of a new advisory group is not done lightly, since the funding will need to be secured through the trust fund created.

The LWVMA, with 47 local Leagues from Capes Cod and Ann to the Berkshires, supports this bill and asks that you favorably report this bill out of committee, as was done last session.

Thank you for your consideration.