



FLORIDA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

Po Box 278
Melbourne, FL 32902-0278

August 9, 2019

Senator Marco Rubio
284 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington DC, 20510

SUBJECT: Request for Co-Sponsorship of the “Botany Bill” (HR 1572) in the US Senate

Dear Senator Rubio:

A Senate companion to HR 1572, the Botanical Sciences and Native Plant Materials Research, Restoration, and Promotion Act, aka the Botany Bill, was recently submitted by Senator Mazie Hirono of Hawaii. The Florida Native Plant Society (FNPS) strongly supports this legislation and is requesting that you agree to serve as a cosponsor in the Senate. Although ten other Senators have signed on as cosponsors, none of them represent Florida. FNPS believes your support for the bill would lend additional emphasis to its importance and help ensure it receives the debate and consideration necessary for it to advance through the Senate. In contrast, a bipartisan group of five members of Florida’s delegation to the House of Representatives are listed among the 49 cosponsors of HR 1572.

FNPS is one of 88 organizations nationwide that have expressed support for the legislation, which would help address a growing deficiency in our capacity to engage in necessary botanical research; promote relevant botanical research; use the best science to manage federal lands and resources cost effectively, encourage the growth of private-sector suppliers of locally-adapted native plant materials that could be used for habitat restoration projects and by the landscaping industry; and establish cooperative grants to prevent rare plant species from requiring costly listing under the Federal Endangered Species Act. We have included attachments to this letter that provide a more complete summary of the bill’s various elements, and the current text of the bill.

Florida has more to gain from passage of the bill than most other states given our large number of imperiled plant species (more than 550 currently listed by state and federal authorities) and the pressures that result from our rapid population growth and associated land development. The deficiency in trained botanical scientists is easily underscored by the skewed ratio of one botanical scientist in the federal workforce for every 20 wildlife biologists, despite the foundational role native plants play in creating the habitats necessary to sustain native wildlife. The supply of locally adapted native plants and seeds in Florida is insufficient to meet the demands of our in-state habitat restoration projects and landscaping industry. Despite this deficiency in supply, native plants still accounted for more than more than \$170 million in

Preserving, conserving and restoring the native plants and native plant communities of Florida

nursery sales in 2015 (15.5 percent of total nursery sales) and an expanded economic impact of \$1.2 billion based on University of Florida survey data.

FNPS believes the environmental and economic benefits that could accrue to the state of Florida from passage and implementation of the Botany Bill would greatly exceed the modest projected costs. On behalf of our 4,000+ members, we ask you to consider cosponsoring the Botany Bill. We are prepared to answer any questions you have about the merits of the bill and look forward to your reply. You can reach me at the letterhead address, or by telephone at (407)709-7042. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Susan Carr, President

Eugene M. Kelly, Chair of Policy and Legislation

cc: Representative Francis Rooney (FL-19)
Representative Debbie Wasserman Schultz (FL-23)
Representative Brian Mast (FL-18)
Representative Alcee Hastings (FL-20)
Representative Darren Soto (FL-9)