

Good morning Chairwoman Haaland, Ranking Member Young/ Curtis, and members of the subcommittee,

Thank you for inviting me to address you this morning and for considering HR 1572, the **Botanic Sciences and Native Plant Materials Research, Restoration, and Promotion Act**,

A bipartisan bill that I have introduced this Congress with my friend Representative Francis Rooney from Florida.

Since I first introduced this bill in the 115th Congress, I have been overwhelmed by the support and enthusiasm from the botanical science community.

Botanists, ecologists, horticultural experts, and enthusiasts have held dozens of meetings and briefings for Members of Congress to help educate us about the importance of native plant ecosystems,

And thanks in large part to their efforts, this bill now has 47 cosponsors.

The Botanic Science bill, as I call it, is relatively narrow in scope.

It creates a new program of botanical science research within the Department of the Interior to help increase federal botanic expertise and allows DOI to hire new, additional personnel.

The bill creates a student loan repayment program for botanical scientists to encourage more students to make the decision to enter the field and to support them once they've graduated.

This is crucial. Currently, the country is projected to lose nearly half its botanical expertise in the next decade as experienced scientists retire and are not replaced.

Already, the federal Bureau of Land Management employs just one botanist for every four million acres of public land it controls

And the US Geological Survey has reported a deficiency in botanical capacity.

At the same time, the number of advanced degrees earned in botany has fallen by 41% in the last ten years.

The consequences could be massive, both in the economic productivity of our public lands and in the loss of critical and unique native landscapes.

The bill also requires DOI to work with other executive agencies to develop a plan to preference the use of locally-adapted native plant materials in their land management activities

And it requires states to utilize native plant species where possible and practical.

Finally, the bill formally authorizes a number of existing plant conservation and promotion activities across the government.

Ecology and botanical sciences will help us solve issues such as food security, ecosystem preservation, habitat restoration, protection of endangered species, and control of invasives.

Botanical experts both within the government and outside of it help to study, effectively manage, and guide the sustainable use of our nation's vast plant resources,

Something that is particularly important as we stare down the barrel of a changing climate.

I believe that we owe it to America's future generations to preserve the environments that help make the United States such a unique and inspiring place to call home.

Far from top down, prescriptive legislation, my bill – the Botanic Sciences and Native Plant Materials Research, Restoration, and Promotion Act – would put the scientists and experts in place on the ground, in ecosystems, in local contexts, to make the right decisions based on their knowledge.

This bill will help build demand for native seed and help ensure America continues to look like the wild and varied place it is.

I'm very pleased that Wayne Pladgett, a 25 year veteran of the US Forest Service and 10 year veteran of BLM, has come all this way to testify on behalf of this bill today.

Mr. Pladget is an ecologist with first hand experience about the importance of native plant expertise in the federal government and he will do an outstanding job answering your questions about the bill today.

I thank you again, Madame Chairwoman and Mr. Ranking Member, as well as Chariman Grijalva for

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holding this hearing today and I hope the committee sees fit to report this bill out to the full house shortly.

Thank you for the time.