

Testimony in support of H7293: Old Growth Forest Protection Act

[REDACTED], Barrington, RI 02806

Date of Hearing: April 4, 2024

To Chair Bennett and the honorable Members of the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee:

I am writing to show my support for the protection of Old Growth Forests in Rhode Island. I am a biology and AP Environmental Science teacher at Barrington High School and I care deeply about protecting what is left of our natural world. I can not impart to this committee how difficult it is to look at the open and youthful faces of my students and be tasked with explaining to them the great peril we have placed our planet in through our consumption and the collective weight of our global population. I have to tell children, wide eyed and beautiful children who love nature, that we are in a mass extinction, that we have filled our oceans with plastics and poisoned our bodies with flame retardants, pesticides, and microplastics. My curriculum covers the devastating effects of climate change and the transformation of our biosphere and somehow I have to deliver this news with hope, with promise that if we understand the role our ecosystems play in modulating our climate and cycling nutrients, biomass and energy and if we value the other species, great and small, that we share this planet with, we can solve this problem.

So I envy you, because I am in the business of education and persuasion. My role is part of a long game and right now we need immediate action. That is what you have the power to do! I want to be able to get in front of my students tomorrow and tell them there is hope. The State leadership cares about our world and about your future. They passed the bill to protect the treasure and biological library that an old growth forest represents. They understand a tree is NOT replaceable. That biodiversity is not a resource. It is the other organisms we share our Earth with and they deserve to have the space to live too. I want to tell them you heard them and you acted. Please, I am begging you to give me hope so I can continue to teach in a time of global crisis!

Thank you very much for considering my input, and thank you to Representative Shanley for introducing this important bill.

Amy O'Donnell, 124 Ferry Lane, Barrington, R.I., 02806