

Testimony supporting H7293: Old Growth Forest Protection Act.

Barbara Walsh. 62 Frederick Street, Warwick, RI 02888

Date of Hearing: April 4, 2024

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

This is a critical bill in order to protect very unique and rare ecosystems. It is estimated that only 1% of forests/woodlands are old growth/mature trees in Rhode Island. They provide unusual benefits that younger forests do not. There is much talk of the need to plant many more trees, yet without passage of this bill the destruction of the very trees most offering benefits such as carbon sequestration, specialized ecosystems for birds and wildlife, tree canopy which aids in cooler temperatures, and retention of moisture on the ground would be lost.

Though there is disagreement about some aspects of this bill, I ask that you remember the key focus and support that goal – protection of unique habitats. Once these trees are lost, it will take many decades to replace them. Their value, if they survive, far exceeds the value of what might be gained by destroying them.

I ask you to support this bill.