



## Rhode Island Forest Conservator's Organization, Inc.

April 4, 2024

Honorable David Bennett, Chairman  
House Environment and Natural Resources Committee  
RI State House  
Providence, RI 02908

Re: H-7293 Old Growth Forest Protection Act - AGAINST

Dear Mr. Bennett and the Committee,

The RI Forest Conservators Organization, Inc. (RIFCO) is a statewide non-profit volunteer organization that represents forest landowners and other forest conservationists. Our mission is the protection and wise use of Rhode Island's woodland resources through education and advocacy.

We are writing to object to the passage of the proposed Old Growth Forest Protection Act. H-7293 seeks to create a new state agency which would have broad powers and authority to direct the land management activities of the existing Department of Environmental Management and all town-owned lands. Especially egregious is its implication that the state and towns could request reviews of privately-owned property, which is a serious trampling of private property rights.

Although we forest landowners share in the common goal of conserving Rhode Island's forested lands, we are concerned by what the overall goal of its advocates may be, namely to shut down the active management of our state's forests, both publicly and privately-held.

It is our position that all of our forests are worthy of protection from conversion to non-forest uses (keeping forests as forests), and that active management of our state's forests, with protection from disturbance provided for unique natural heritage sites by the existing state agency responsible for the management of our state's resources, is key in providing a wide range of ecosystem services, including wood products, rural jobs and economies, clean water, clean air, recreational resources, wildlife habitat, and both the sequestration and storage of atmospheric carbon.

Respectfully,

William Fortune, President