



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-7618 Forest Parity Act - FOR

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 support the passage of the proposed Forest Parity Act. H-7618 seeks to place our working forests, its owners, and the wood-based businesses that help support our local land-based economy on par with the tax and regulatory environment that agricultural land receives under state laws and regulations.

The ability of forest landowners to implement forest stand improvement projects and to realize an economic benefit from owning and managing their wooded acreage relies on a viable wood-based economy in the future. Passage of this Act will help assure that existing businesses will remain viable and provide jobs in a rural, working landscape, and help minimize the conversion of our forests to other uses.

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 state laws and regulations that foster active management of our state's forests and promotes an economically viable workforce 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