

Testimony opposing H7618 Forestry Parity Act

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

I am again writing to oppose H7618. This is a confusing bill. Its intentions are not clearly stated unless that was the purpose. Municipal zoning and planning department directives should not be overridden by state law for the purpose of enhancing logging. When municipal ordinances denote the purpose of land usage, state law should not be interfering with that.

Using forest land for increased economic benefits is clearly stated. This is perfectly acceptable for privately owned woodlands, but it is not acceptable for state or municipal lands which have been paid for with scarce taxpayer dollars, requiring multiple green bonds to enable acquisition of additional forested lands and open space. These are citizen owned forest lands. There is much discussion of and advocacy for the purchase of additional land to be held for the benefit of all citizens and for wildlife habitat. These properties were not purchased for the sake of 'economic growth' for one industry. There has not been clear statements from DEM as to the monies provided the state by loggers who use our precious resources for their own profit. If this is not an intention of this bill, it should be clearly stated. State and municipal woodlands should be exempt from all logging and timber industries otherwise benefiting from this bill.

DEM protects no unique forests e.g. old growth which constitutes only 1% of our forests and deserves protection – even the federal government is now taking action to protect old growth ecosystems on federal lands; to identify endangered or threatened species in RI in order to protect the ecosystems they inhabit. These actions should be taken before DEM allows any logging though I don't believe this should ever take place on public lands.

Please do not support this bill.