

Dear Members of the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 5294, the "Old Growth Forest Protection Act," which aims to preserve Rhode Island's invaluable old growth forests by prohibiting extractive logging and clearcutting on state-owned lands. This legislation is a crucial step toward safeguarding our state's natural heritage and environmental health.

Key Benefits of House Bill 5294:

1. **Biodiversity Conservation:** Old growth forests serve as critical habitats for a diverse array of native species, some of which are uniquely adapted to these environments. Protecting these forests ensures the survival of these species and maintains the ecological balance essential for a healthy ecosystem.
2. **Climate Change Mitigation:** These ancient forests act as significant carbon sinks, sequestering more carbon than younger forests. Preserving them aligns with Rhode Island's commitment to combating climate change by reducing carbon emissions and promoting natural carbon storage solutions.
3. **Ecosystem Resilience:** Old growth forests have demonstrated resilience against natural disturbances, including wildfires. Their complex structures and microclimates can help mitigate the spread and intensity of fires, contributing to landscape stability and safety.
4. **Alignment with Environmental Goals:** The prohibition of destructive logging practices in these areas supports the objectives outlined in Rhode Island's "2021 Act on Climate," reinforcing the state's dedication to environmental stewardship and sustainable land management.

In conclusion, the passage of House Bill 5294 will ensure the protection of Rhode Island's rare and irreplaceable old growth forests, securing their ecological, climatic, and cultural benefits for current and future generations. I respectfully urge the committee to support this vital legislation.

Sincerely,
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