



## **Testimony in Support of House Bill 7914**

### **An Act Relating to Agriculture and Forestry – Natural Forest Protection Act**

Chairman and members of the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee,

My name is Marc Bialek, I am the Executive Director of RINLA, and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the **Rhode Island Nursery and Landscape Association (RINLA)**, a statewide organization representing landscape professionals, arborists, garden centers, and green industry businesses across Rhode Island. RINLA represents almost 200 companies and thousands of employees.

RINLA supports **House Bill 7914**, which establishes the **Natural Forest Protection Act** and provides meaningful protection for Rhode Island’s remaining natural forest ecosystems on state lands.

Rhode Island’s forests are an essential part of our state’s environmental health and our economy. They provide critical ecosystem services including clean water, carbon sequestration, wildlife habitat, soil stabilization, and recreational opportunities for residents and visitors alike. Protecting these forests is not only a conservation issue—it is an investment in the long-term sustainability of our state’s natural resources.

House Bill 7914 recognizes the importance of preserving natural forests by **prohibiting extractive and even-age logging on state-owned lands and within designated natural area preserves**, while still allowing limited exceptions for safety hazards, invasive species removal, and certain management activities.

This balanced approach ensures that:

- **Rhode Island’s remaining natural forest areas are protected for future generations**
- **Rare ecosystems and biodiversity are preserved**, including habitat for native plants and wildlife

- **State forest management prioritizes ecological integrity and long-term sustainability**

From the perspective of the green industry, preserving healthy forests supports the broader landscape and horticulture sector. Forest ecosystems are the source of many native plants and ecological processes that sustain pollinators, soil health, and water quality—factors that directly impact landscaping, horticulture, and agriculture throughout the state.

The bill also highlights the need for **science-based environmental review and public transparency** in forest management decisions on public land. These safeguards help ensure that state-owned forests are managed responsibly and with appropriate public input.

Rhode Island has limited land area and some of the most fragmented forest systems in New England. Protecting our remaining natural forests is essential to maintaining biodiversity and ecological resilience in the face of climate change and development pressures.

For these reasons, the Rhode Island Nursery and Landscape Association respectfully urges the committee to **support and advance House Bill 7914**.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

**Marc Bialek**

On behalf of the

**Rhode Island Nursery and Landscape Association**

[www.rinla.org](http://www.rinla.org)

**Executive Director**

**401-297-5809**

[executivedirector@rinla.org](mailto:executivedirector@rinla.org)