

Testimony from Jordan Day, Policy Director
H 7066 – Old Growth Forest Preservation Act
House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources – January 27, 2022

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on H 7066, the Old Growth Forest Preservation Act. We appreciate Chairman Bennett’s efforts to protect old growth and other forests located on state and municipal property.

In 2021, the General Assembly established the Forest Conservation Commission, coordinated with the Department of Environmental Management, to seek new funding and identify incentives for landowners to maintain their land as forest. They are empowered under Rhode Island General Law to develop criteria for defining the “most important forest land,” developing an inventory of forest land and make funding recommendations to the Department of Environmental Management from the forest land conservation fund.

While we understand the intent of this legislation, it does present challenges to cities and towns that do not have the resources to comply with the new requirements regarding tree coring, tree species identification, soil sampling and land surveying. We understand that the Chair included language which specifies that cities and towns can seek funding to support these efforts, but it is unclear what the financial need or impact is for cities and towns. By providing financial resources and defining a specific funding source to support these efforts, cities and towns would be better able to manage the requirements outlined within the legislation.

Thank you for your consideration of our views.