

Testimony in opposition to H5781: State Forests and Forestry Projects

Barbara Walsh. 62 Frederick Street, Warwick, RI 02888

Date of Hearing: May 13, 2025

To Chair Abney and the honorable Members of the House Finance Committee

This bill provides broad discretion to DEM to engage in any forest activity once acquiring 10 new positions in the Forestry Division. This could encourage more logging activities and less protection of wildlife and habitats. I also question that this is a greater or more legitimate need within DEM than adding positions to compliance and enforcement or permitting divisions. As well, there has been inadequate attention spent on identifying crucial habitats for threatened species and migratory birds. Perhaps biologists would also be a better use of additional staff positions with the goal; of protection and conservation rather than logging and other harmful forest projects.

Since the scope of this legislation is so broad, it is difficult to determine what 'forest projects' means, and how valuable they might truly be to all citizens who own Rhode Island forests vs the potential subsidizing of private logging companies. Given the current economics in the state I suggest this would be a poor use of the thousands of dollars it would cost for 10 positions plus benefits.