

Please consider my opposition to 2025 H 5781 unless there are specifics detailed regarding the roles these 10 staff are obligated to fulfill on behalf of Rhode Island forest health. In so doing, I may work against my own interest who would benefit from a job there. I would never want a position inoculating trees, not reporting prescribed burns and guaranteeing their safety, allowing precious carbon sequestering trees to be logged, spraying poisons, or many ways this money could be spent. We need to employ the best research to strike natural balance contending with fires or infestations. Our state has undergone excess development and hasn't averted wildfires, invasive species, disease, and other public hazards. I am sure there has been avoidance of harm in the face of aggressive industry and commerce. However, funds should not be increased for treatments citizens are not consenting to until our department overseeing issues pertaining to ecosystems, to facilitate their species survival and stability, may rule out those threats, and improve sustainability from conditions decades ago. Consider that there is not oversight once monies are designated, and please require critical information about how it must be spent.

First, the people should see that all we count on for clean air and water are not under threat and that it is safe to interact without constant imminent environmental toxins and encroachment. I depend on public lands to engage with the elements, as a chemical-sensitive Rhode Islander who gets sick most times I go out, and even at home. There are forests I walk that I can only visit on the weekend because weekday business fumes make me dizzy, which I had not realized for years. Humans need these spaces along with our fellow creatures. I cannot even visit state forests that may have synthetic applications, sadly.

We should not see hopelessness to return to the habitats lost or hopelessness against climate change before expanding the budget, and I have faith this will occur. I look forward to seeing how DEM will better safeguard all we rely on which involves describing the duties it will be bound to from a large sum of tax dollars. The Old Growth Tree Society's suggestion of reinstating Natural Heritage Areas is an excellent use of available funding.

Respectfully,  
Jennifer Brown  
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