

Testimony in Opposition to H8152: Forest Parity Act

Barbara Walsh. 62 Frederick Street, Warwick, RI 02888

Date of Hearing: May 26, 2026

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

I am asking that you oppose H8152. In a very quick review of this legislation, I would raise the owing concerns:

All references to protection of wildlife or biodiversity are vague. There are no references to what wildlife, in which habitats will be protected. Are there any standards for determining how such a value would be placed on animals or ecosystems?

Are the stipulations in this legislation applied differently to state, municipal, or private forestland?

Regarding municipal zoning - page 26 lines 27 and 28 refers to forest product operations being allowed in ALL zoning districts. Even residential? 2.27.1-3 says a saw mill is a forest product operation. So this would allow a sawmill in a residential district?

There seems to be many contradictions in this bill. By providing such tax deductions and fewer restrictions in zoning, it would appear that increased logging, etc. would be rewarded. But it also denotes conservation of forests which would be at odds with heightened pressure to log more. On the one hand, we speak about the need for conservation of our remaining forests and open spaces and struggle to provide the funds to purchase/protect these remaining spaces while on the other hand a bill such as this would reward the very destruction of those same spaces. As private companies, loggers can pursue their business goals for profit as any business can. But why should the state be providing tax advantages for activities which destroy habitat, diminish soil health, affect increased heat and water evaporation cycles, and emit more carbon dioxide? To add insult to injury, all of this would be allowed in all zoning districts, taking municipal control away from residents and local leaders who currently define what activities can occur where in their city or town.

Please oppose this bill.