

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing in opposition to H 8152, the Forest Parity Act. I am opposed to tax subsidies for the timber industry, as supported in this bill by removing the use and sales tax on logging equipment, and to the expansion of logging to all zoning districts in Rhode Island.

Last year, this bill, numbered H 5098 in 2025, passed into law but was amended after much public outcry over the language that would have created a publicly subsidized timber industry. Why are we revisiting these issues again? Who will be responsible for making up the loss of the tax break given to timber interests -- Rhode Island's taxpayers?

Instead of zone expansion and tax subsidies for the timber industry, this committee should consider the research and science behind best practices in forest management and propose more rigorous legislation to encourage science-based, sustainable practices of managing forested lands in Rhode Island.

As others have stated in earlier testimonies on last year's legislation, our forests do not fall into the same category as agriculture.

As stated in an investigative article by EcoRI, in Sept., 2025 regarding testimony on H 5098:

*The Old Growth Tree Society and 11 other entities, including the the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council, the Rhode Island Nursery and Landscape Association, and two land trusts, filed a joint objection, writing that the legislation attempts to compare agriculture to forestry.*

*“[O]ur native forests are not crops on a farm. They are not tree plantations. Logging Natural Forests is not farming,” they wrote.*

*The letter noted the signees are not “opposed to logging taking place in areas that are not old growth forests, natural heritage areas, or other rare forest habitats.” They also noted “taxpayers shouldn’t have to pay more taxes so the timber industry pays less in taxes.”*

Destructive logging, such as clearcutting methods, destroys biodiversity, spreads invasive species, creates tick habitat, and releases most of the carbon stored in a forest into the atmosphere as air pollution. We are all experiencing the effects of a changing climate, and careful management of this precious resource in Rhode Island will provide benefits to all.

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