

Dear Valued Members of the Rhode Island Legislature,

I am writing in strong opposition to Bill H 8152, the “Forest Parity Act,” and in defense of Rhode Island’s increasingly vulnerable forests.

Our forests are not vacant land awaiting economic use. They are critical ecological infrastructure that protect biodiversity, absorb carbon, regulate temperature, reduce flooding, stabilize soil, filter pollution, and support the physical and mental well-being of Rhode Islanders.

As German naturalist Peter Wohlleben writes in his acclaimed 2016 book *The Hidden Life of Trees*:

“Forest air is the epitome of healthy air.... Every day in summer, trees release about 29 tons of oxygen into the air per square mile of forest.”

Modern forest ecology strongly supports the importance of preserving intact forests.

According to J.E. Reek et al. in the 2026 *Science* journal article “More than mitigation: The role of forests in climate adaptation,” forests reduce flooding, heat extremes, and climate instability through cooling, moisture retention, rainfall regulation, and hydrological stabilization.

Similarly, Birdsey et al. found in the 2025 journal *Biological Conservation* that mature and old-growth forests continue storing carbon for centuries and contain significantly greater carbon density than younger forests.

By making logging machinery tax exempt and expanding logging operations across all zoning districts, H 8152 functions primarily as a timber industry expansion bill. It incentivizes forest extraction at a time when climate science increasingly emphasizes the importance of protecting existing forests.

Clearcutting and aggressive logging practices do not restore healthy ecosystems. They fragment habitat, reduce biodiversity, increase soil disturbance, dry the forest floor through canopy loss, and increase vulnerability to invasive species and wildfire risk.

The 2023 Exeter wildfire reportedly began in an area that had previously been logged and clearcut. This should give legislators pause before advancing policies that may increase forest disturbance and fuel accumulation near residential areas.

Harvard Forest ecologists Dr. David Foster and Dr. David Orwig have argued that forests containing diseased or dead trees are often ecologically healthier when allowed to regenerate naturally rather than being aggressively logged. Dead wood plays an essential

role in nutrient cycling, habitat support, moisture retention, and long-term forest regeneration.

This bill also appears inconsistent with the goals of Rhode Island's 2021 Act on Climate, particularly given the carbon emissions associated with logging and biomass energy production. Trees burned in biomass facilities release stored carbon immediately into the atmosphere while requiring decades to regrow.

Rhode Island's forests are already limited in size and increasingly fragmented. Once mature forests are lost, they cannot simply be replaced within a human lifetime.

I respectfully urge the Committee to reject H 8152 and prioritize long-term ecological stewardship over short-term industrial extraction.

Sincerely,

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Homeowner, Taxpayer, and Advocate for Rhode Island Forests

"It's not easy being green...."

- Kermit the Frog

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