

RI Environmental Groups against the Forest Parity Act S 0679/ H 5098

Dear Senators and Representatives,

On behalf of the undersigned environmental organizations and our supporters and members, we write to express our firm opposition to the Forest Parity Act S 0679/ H 5098.

The Forest Parity Act, if passed, would remove the use and sales tax on logging equipment and expand logging to all zoning districts.

This legislation attempts to compare agriculture to "forestry", meaning logging.

However, our native forests are not crops on a farm. They are not tree plantations.

Forests are shaped by nature, self-perpetuating, and able to thrive without human interference.

Logging Natural Forests is not farming.

We also have concerns regarding H 5607, S 781, H 5534, and S 431, and how it would define agricultural operations in state statute to include forestry.

The Forest Parity Act S 0679/ H 5098, would make it more profitable to log in Rhode Island which would incentivize even more clearcutting and other destructive logging techniques practiced by many lumber and tree service companies.

Destructive logging destroys biodiversity, allows invasive species to thrive, pollutes waterways, damages soil, increases the risk of wildfire, and contributes to Climate Change through the carbon released from the trees when they are logged.

Many of the unused material from logging operations are burned in biomass power plants which emit greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere, which affect the health of nearby residents and contributes to Climate Change.

S 0679/ H 5098, is nothing more than a Timber Industry Expansion Bill.

We are not opposed to logging taking place in areas that are not Old Growth Forests, Natural Heritage Areas, or other rare forest habitats, nor are we opposed to logging planted tree farms.

However, taxpayers shouldn't have to pay more taxes so the Timber Industry pays less in taxes.

The risks to the environment and the people of Rhode Island are too great to justify this industry's tax-subsidized expansion in the state which is not needed either ecologically or economically.

Therefore, we ask that you not pass the Forest Parity Act S 0679/ H 5098.

The Old Growth Tree Society of Rhode Island

The Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council

Indivisible Rhode Island

Defenders of Animals

Volunteer Services for Animals

The Rhode Island Nursery and Landscape Association

RI4SafeTech

Native Green

Alliance for Tribal Clean Energy

The North Smithfield Land Trust

The Cumberland Land Trust

Largess Forestry Inc.