

MOUNTAIN LOGGERS GROUP, INC.
458 OLD MORGANTOWN RD E.
FRIENDSVILLE, MD 21531

February 3, 2021

THE HONORABLE DERECK E. DAVIS, CHAIR
& DISTINGUISHED COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented many unprecedented issues in largely uncharted territory. As we approach one year of combating the virus, we have all fought for our families, our health, and our livelihoods. The challenges raised by the virus have been made even more difficult for small business owners in essential industries. The legislation proposed in House Bill 581 would create more hardships for the Maryland logging community.

In March 2020, Governor Hogan named logging and forestry as essential businesses. The Maryland forest products industry is responsible for contributing to many aspects of Maryland's economy, from paper products, to supplies for livestock, and building materials. Indeed, the work is essential. The forestry industry is not directly named in the bill, but the definition of essential employer/employee is broad. As forestry was deemed essential early on, one can only assume the trade will be included in the legislation.

While our impact is large, our community is small in comparison. In western Maryland the industry largely consists of smaller family-owned businesses in a rural landscape who have deeply felt the blows of the pandemic. The costly, unsustainable requirements laid out in House Bill 581 would be devastating to these small businesses who have already suffered so many hardships. The inclusion of the forestry industry in this bill would mean more financial difficulty for these small businesses and could ultimately lead to layoffs and business closures, a threat that has already been looming since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important now more than ever to support this industry to help our communities flourish.

For these reasons, we respectfully request your NO vote on House Bill 581.

Sincerely,

Danny Sines

President, Mountain Loggers Group