



**HB991: Natural Resources – Forest Mitigation Banks – Qualified
Preservation**

Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs
March 31, 2021

Positon: Oppose

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Members of the Committee,

Clean Water Action respectfully opposes HB991 and requests an unfavorable report. In 2019, the General Assembly passed SB729, a technical study on forest conversation in Maryland. It is premature to change the Forest Conservation Act without this analysis.

Until that study is complete, we do not have the information that we need to identify the appropriate role of mitigation banks in maintaining forest cover across the state. Many of the same stakeholders supporting and opposing this legislation are actively involved in the study, and we feel that it is most appropriate to wait until *after* the study is completed to change provisions of the Forest Conservation Act.

HB991 would codify a major modification of the Forest Conservation Act without the information that this committee and others identified as critical to updating standards within the FCA. It would make drastic changes without setting parameters or priorities for the development risk, location, or ecological value of existing forest offered for credit.

It is premature to make this change, and Clean Water Action respectfully requests an UNFAVORABLE report.

Best,

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