

HB 991 – Natural Resources – Forest Mitigation Banks – Qualified Preservation

Date: February 24, 2021

Position: OPPOSE

To: Energy and Transportation Committee

From: Lani Hummel, Annapolis Roads, lanihummel@aol.com

I am writing to OPPOSE HB 991 and request an unfavorable report from the Environment and Transportation Committee.

Maryland loses about 3,000 acres of forest every year. Forest clearing leads to poor water quality, fragmentation and loss of wildlife habitat, reduced carbon sequestration, dirty air, increased temperatures, localized flooding and lower property values. Development is the single largest driver of forest loss in the state.

Maryland's Forest Conservation Act (FCA) was passed in 1991 to reduce forest loss from development. The FCA requires replanting of trees to offset a bare minimum of losses on development sites. The result is a smaller net loss of forest than if the law did not exist.

Contrary to the goal of the FCA, HB 991, if enacted, will codify practices that result in greater forest loss during development without providing an effective preservation benefit. This bill is premature and should be held by the Committee until the forest mitigation study directed by the General Assembly via SB 729 of 2019 is complete.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask the Committee to issue an UNFAVORABLE report on HB 991.