



**Committee: Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee**

**Testimony on: HB884 “State Conservation Land - Old-Growth Forests - Management”**

**Position: Favorable**

**Hearing Date: March 30, 2022**

We, the undersigned organizations, strongly support HB884. This important legislation continues the decades-old campaign by a multitude of environmental and conservation organizations as well as Maryland government entities to protect Maryland’s remaining and exceedingly rare old-growth forests. Old growth forests within state forests are off-limits to logging due to the Forest Stewardship Council certification requirements, however, old-growth areas in Maryland’s state parks and wildlife management areas have no such protection. HB0884 would prohibit logging of old growth forests within state parks and wildlife management areas.

We support the conservation of old growth forests because they:

- **Sustain species of greatest conservation need:** About 40% of Maryland’s Rare, Threatened, and Endangered (RTE) species benefit from or are limited to old growth forests.
- **Provide reservoirs of genetic diversity:** They contain unique habitats and micro-habitats supporting a rich diversity of flora and fauna.
- **Support research:** They provide a critical baseline for study of managed forests and serve as reference sites for ecological conditions and historical databases.
- **Provide valuable ecosystem services** such as watershed protection, carbon sequestration, and invasive species mitigation.

- **Provide an ecological refuge against human pressure:** There is intrinsic value in wildness for wildness' sake; they are aesthetically pleasing.

The bill mandates that an old-growth “no logging” management best practice be expanded to include Maryland State Parks and Wildlife Management Areas (WMA). Nearly 43% of old growth forests on State Park lands and WMAs have no protection. And, the largest and oldest trees are found in unlogged forests. Old forests are better at capturing carbon and storing carbon dioxide than young forests, which also have a seven times higher mortality rate. We understand that a supportive amendment may be offered that expands this commendable bill to cover Natural Resource Management Areas. We would strongly support such an amendment, which would have little or no fiscal impact.

For all these reasons, we strongly encourage a favorable report.

Sierra Club Maryland Chapter, Rosa Hance, Chair  
Maryland Legislative Coalition, Climate Justice Wing, Diana Younts  
Maryland Legislative Coalition, Cecilia Plante  
The Nature Conservancy Maryland/DC Chapter, Michelle Dietz, Director of Government Relations  
Safe Skies Maryland, Mark Southerland, Legislative Director  
Indivisible Howard County, Richard Deutschmann  
Maryland Conservation Council, Paulette Hammond, President  
Maryland Ornithological Society, Kurt Schwarz, Conservation Chair  
Maryland Campaign for the Environmental Human Rights Amendment, Nina Cardin, Director  
Audubon Mid-Atlantic, Jim Brown, Director of Policy  
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland, Phil Webster  
Audubon Society of Central Maryland, Angela Moxley, President  
Baltimore Green Space, Katherine Lautar, Executive Director  
Catoctin Land Trust, David Lillard, Executive Director  
Friends of St Clements Bay, Elisabeth Curtz  
Queen Anne’s Conservation Association, Jay Falstad, Executive Director  
Baltimore Tree Trust, Justin Bowers, Chief Operating Officer  
Maryland League of Conservation Voters, Marisa Olszewski  
Chesapeake Legal Alliance, Evan Isaacson, Senior Attorney, Director of Research  
National Aquarium, Laura Bankey, Vice President of Conservation Programs  
Anacostia Riverkeeper, Trey Sherard  
Beaverdam Creek Watershed Watch Group, Tom Taylor, Co-Chair  
Southern Maryland Audubon Society, Bob Lukinic, Conservation Chair