



February 28th, 2022

To: Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee

From: The Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission (SMADC)

Re: Support of SB0695 – Natural Resources- Voluntary Firewood Treatment Certification Program- Establishment

As Director of the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission (SMADC), a division of the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland, I am writing to you in solid support for SB695, which establishes a Voluntary Firewood Treatment Certification Program.

The forestry industry is key to the Maryland economy. Forestry grows food and fiber, creates hundreds of products and materials, supports the environment, and builds careers. Nearly 40% of Maryland is forested. As the single largest land use in the state, forests are vital to the health of the Chesapeake Bay and offer numerous environmental and economic benefits.

In 2017, the statewide forestry industry directly contributed about \$4.2 billion and supported 18,046 jobs in the Maryland economy. In Southern Maryland, forestry businesses contribute over \$585 million to the state economy, supporting more than 3,000 jobs. Forests provide much-needed employment and economic sustainability for our rural communities, additionally many climate experts believe that a responsibly managed forest offers one of the best and least expensive ways to mitigate climate change by sequestering carbon and using carbon-neutral renewable energy. Forests also provide a viable timber market, incentivizing landowners to retain and care for their trees ensuring the overall health of their forests and habitat for wildlife.

The bill would give the Department of Natural Resources the authority to inspect and certify that kilns used to dry and heat treat firewood are operated to standards designed to control the spread of forest pests such as Emerald Ash Borer, Gypsy Moth, and Spotted Lantern-Fly.

Historically USDA APIS has provided this certification, but they are slowly discontinuing the program and turning it over to the states. Currently, no agency in Maryland has the authority to provide this service. The Maryland Forests Association has worked closely with both MDA and DNR to establish this program in Maryland. This legislation could lay the groundwork to grow or establish a new firewood producer in our region if enacted. Pulpwood markets have suffered drastically since the Luke Mill closure. As a result, much of our pulpwood is being shipped into Virginia and is often turned away due to quotas, leaving forest landowners in our area with



little to no options for forest management, making our forestland prone to development pressure.

Therefore, we request solid support for SB695, which establishes a Voluntary Firewood Treatment Certification Program, and supports the vital forestry industry of Maryland.

Sincerely,

Shelby Watson Hampton

Shelby Watson-Hampton
Director, Southern Maryland Agricultural
Development Commission (SMADC)

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