

**Environment and Transportation Committee of the House**

**Testimony on:** HB0884 State Conservation Land - Old-Growth Forests - Protection

**Submitting:** Susan Barnett

**Position:** Favorable

**Hearing Date:** 2.25.2022

To the Honorable Chair Barve and all members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

I am writing in favor of HB0884 for the following reasons:

Old-growth forests are forests that have never been clear-cut. Such forests store the most carbon and are vitally important for biodiversity.

Such forests are rare. It is estimated that in Maryland only .01% of forests are old growth. Most biologists believe that all remaining old growth areas should be preserved. Maryland should begin formally preserving the old-growth forests on its public lands.

According to a 2007 Maryland Dept of Natural Resources report, there are 2300 acres of Old Growth in 40 separate forested tracts. Many of these are protected as Maryland "Wildlands". Seventeen of the 40 old-growth areas have no protection as Wildlands. These total 386 acres.

Although old-growth areas in Maryland's State Forests are off-limits to logging due to the Forest Stewardship Council certification requirements, old-growth areas in Maryland's state parks have no such protection.

This bill will formalize protection for old-growth forests owned by the State of Maryland, so forests that have been standing for hundreds, possibly thousands, of years will remain standing through future political and staff changes.

I recommend a favorable report on this important bill.

Sincerely,

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