



Maryland Forests Association, Inc.

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Maryland's voice for forest, wildlife, and natural resource management

February 5, 2022

The Honorable Kumar P. Barve, Chair
The Dana Stein, Vice Chair
Maryland House Environment and Transportation Committee
Room 251
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401 – 1991

Re: SB0348 / HB0653 Conservation Finance Act of 2022

Dear Chairman Barve, Vice-Chair Stein, and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Forests Association (MFA) supports and encourages the passage of HB0653, the Conservation Finance Act.

Maryland Forests Association, Inc. (MFA) is Maryland's voice for forest, wildlife, and natural resource management. As a non-profit 501 c(3) membership-driven organization established in 1976, we represent the entire forest community statewide. Our membership includes private landowners, foresters, recreational groups, and industry stakeholders. We are a conservation-minded group that wants to see forests remain forests. Passage of HB0653 will help accomplish our vision- "The Maryland Forests Association envisions a future in which vibrant forests are maintained throughout the State, providing diverse economic and environmental benefits to all."

If adopted, this legislation provides benefits to Maryland forests in a number of ways. First, the bill encourages DNR to bring in expertise on voluntary and other carbon markets. This additional capacity could help speed up opportunities for Maryland landowners to benefit from these markets. Second, the bill supports a diversity of approaches that focus on environmental outcomes that forests can produce and benefit the Chesapeake Bay. Forests are the original 'green infrastructure.' The bill would create contract approaches that allow forest landowners to be rewarded for what they deliver and provide more flexibility on achieving the landowner's goals and objectives on the ground. We respectfully request your favorable report on HB0653 to establish a greater priority for nature-based solutions. A Healthy Forest = A Healthy Bay.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Hill
Executive Director
Maryland Forests Association

CC:
Senator Sarah Elfreth
Delegate Regina Boyce
Delegate Sara Love