



Susan O'Neill, Chair

Charlotte Davis, Executive Director

Testimony in Support of
Senate Bill 715 – State Board of Foresters – Sunset Extension
Education, Energy, and the Environment
March 3, 2023

The Rural Maryland Council supports Senate Bill 715 – State Board of Foresters – Sunset Extension. This bill extends the termination date for the State Board of Foresters within the Maryland Department of Labor by 10 years to July 1, 2035.

The Rural Maryland Council (RMC) supports the robust forest industry in Maryland which would not be where it is today without the State Board of Foresters in place. The State Board of Foresters' mission is to ensure that Maryland's forest resources are protected and managed in a professional and competent manner. The Board fulfills this mission by establishing standards for forestry education, experience, and continuing education for foresters. This results in a high level of competence in planting, conservation, protection, and management of trees and related resources for their continuing benefit to Maryland citizens.

The RMC administers the Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund (MAERDAF). This fund provides grants to rural-serving nonprofit organizations that promote statewide and regional planning, economic and community development, and agricultural and forestry education. In FY2023, RMC awarded \$233,000 in grant funds to 8 organizations whose projects focused on the forest industry. These projects ranged from supporting the purchase of a cable skidder to enhance applied learning to forestry students at Allegany College of Maryland to supporting the Maryland Forestry Foundation and their work with compensating forest landowners for the ecological benefits of practicing sound forest stewardship. This work is made possible by the guidance and the leadership provided by the State Board of Foresters.

The Rural Maryland Council respectfully requests your favorable support of Senate Bill 715.

The Rural Maryland Council (RMC) is an independent state agency governed by a nonpartisan, 40-member board that consists of inclusive representation from the federal, state, regional, county and municipal governments, as well as the for-profit and nonprofit sectors. We bring together federal, state, county and municipal government officials as well as representatives of the for-profit and nonprofit sectors to identify challenges unique to rural communities and to craft public policy, programmatic or regulatory solutions.