

TO: Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment
Natural Resources – Forest Preservation and Retention

TESTIMONY on: SB 526 –
POSITION:
FAVORABLE

HEARING DATE: March 3, 2023

I purchased my home in 2001. The house was nothing special, but the trees were spectacular, both on my property and in the woods and forests in the surrounding community. My plan was to fulfill a lifelong dream of creating my own bird sanctuary. After much hard work, I attracted many birds to my garden. I needed 17 bird feeders that I refilled every day to satisfy my feathered visitors. Then the developers came and the trees and forests began to disappear. As a result, my birds began to disappear as well. Now, I use two bird feeders which I need to refill only once a week. The beautiful bird songs I loved so much have been largely replaced by traffic noise, much more prominent with fewer trees to muffle it. Not long ago, a fellow bird lover who lives in Charles County, came to my house in Annapolis for the first time. When I gave her my address, she said, “Forest Drive, that sounds lovely!” I did not respond. When she arrived, the first thing she said was “Why do they call it Forest Drive?” Good question...The loss of trees and forests is not merely a matter of degradation in the quality of life for bird lovers. Trees and forests are important in our efforts to mitigate the negative impacts of climate change, already apparent in our daily lives and increasing at an alarming rate. The 1991 Forest Conservation Act is woefully inadequate to minimize forest loss and fragmentation. The reforestation of a quarter acre planted for each acre cleared is not sufficient. In addition, protections for the state’s most valuable priority forests leave many vulnerable to removal. We can never forget that every tree lost makes our battle against climate change more daunting. And an exception here, a variance there add up to a significant loss. According to the Harry A. Hughes Center for Agro-Ecology of the University of Maryland, Maryland experienced a net statewide forest loss of more than 19,000 acres from 2013 through 2018. Such a loss is unsustainable if we want a better future for our children and grandchildren.

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I urge you to issue a FAVORABLE report on SB 526 because this legislation will strengthen and update forest goals and definitions to provide clarity and reflect new data, protect and conserve more forest land and tree canopy, and give local governments significantly greater flexibility to pursue solutions that meet local development priorities and advance equity.

Thank you for your consideration,
Lani Hummel
Annapolis Roads