

To: Senate Budget AND TAX

From: Gary Allen, President, Maryland Forestry Foundation

Re: Support For SB0467 Forestry Education fund

Mr. Chairman and members My name is Gary G Allen, President, Maryland Forestry Foundation. We would like to thank Delegate Stein for advancing this bill and for his continuing leadership on forestry-related issues. I would like to call your attention to the written testimony submitted by one of Maryland's last State Foresters in support of this legislation. He underlines both the need for forestry education and the lack of capacity within state government to address it. IT is important to note that this is an extension of existing law. The Forestry Foundation was created over thirty years ago to assist the local forestry Boards to raise and manage funds to achieve their mission to provide stewardship education to Maryland's private forest landowners and local government assistance in outreach. As the number of landowners and threats to healthy forest resources have grown, new tools and resources are required. SB467 is a modest step to strengthen the capacity of the forest community to address this goal. We want to use the example created to address similar needs in the agriculture community when the Agricultural Education Foundation was created and funded by the legislature. The Forestry Foundation is that organization and now we ask you to extend support for an education fund operating within the parameters set by this legislation to work with both **rural and urban landowners, volunteers and professionals** to better provide access to the best management practices available to strengthen their stewardship of Maryland forest resources, better ensure its diversity and continue to preserve it as vital for water quality climate science and the broad array of ecological and social services that all benefit from. We ask you for favorable support of Sb467

Gary G Allen,
President, Maryland Forestry Foundation

See attached testimony from Mr. Don Vanhassent, former State forester,

SB0467– Maryland Forestry Education Fund – Establishment support

My name is Donald VanHassent. I worked for the DNR Forest Service for forty years before retiring in December of 2019. For the last five and a half years, I served as the Director and State Forester. The fourteen years before that I was an Associate Director with the Forest Service.

Among the many activities the Forest Service performed was forestry education. We realized a long time ago that most people didn't know or understand what forests were, what they had to offer, what they could provide, nor did they know or understand what forest management was. Sure, they knew there were trees there; it was a good place to hike or hunt, and sometimes trees were harvested for wood products. But they did not understand the things they could not see – the positive effect forests have on water and air quality, the habitat for animals and plants (both rare and common), and economic impacts to both the forest landowner and the public.

To help address this issue, the Forest Service had a program to conduct educational seminars, school programs, booths at county fairs, etc. We had a small group of employees who had this as their focus while others helped on specific events. Many of these events were conducted in cooperation with the county forest Conservancy District Boards. This changed almost twenty years ago. Budget challenges required a serious look at all aspects of the Forest Service with the intent that something will be cut. It was a very difficult decision, but the Forest Service cut the forestry education program. We felt this would eventually come back to bite us at some point; we just didn't know when.

So, here we are, almost twenty-five years later, and we are still facing many of the same issues. There are approximately 800,000 more citizens in Maryland, probably less forest land, although strong action at state and local levels has reduced the amount lost. We need a strong, focused effort to renew forestry education efforts in Maryland. SB467 is an excellent first step, and I urge you to vote favorably on this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

Donald VanHassent
Maryland State Forester, retired