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MAJORITY WHIP

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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony of Senator Joanne C. Benson SB467 Maryland Forestry Education Fund – Mandatory Funding – Extension

I stand before you today to express the importance of the Forestry Education Fund. The Maryland Forestry Education Fund was established to bolster the Maryland Forestry Foundation's efforts in providing education and resources to forest landowners, enhancing the capabilities of district forestry boards, and increasing the knowledge of local governments to achieve healthy and sustainable forests. The fund also supports businesses in testing innovative best management practices in forestry. Some of the Key points are as follows:

- **Environmental Awareness:** Forest education helps people understand forests' critical role in our ecosystem. It highlights the importance of conservation, biodiversity, and the impact of deforestation.
- **Sustainable Practices:** Educating communities about sustainable forestry practices can lead to better management and use of forest resources, ensuring that they are available for future generations.
- **Climate Change Mitigation:** Forests act as carbon sinks, absorbing CO₂ from the atmosphere. Education can promote actions that protect and expand these vital areas, contributing to climate change mitigation efforts.
- **Economic Benefits:** Many communities rely on forests for their livelihoods. Education can provide knowledge on how to sustainably harvest resources without depleting them, thus supporting long-term economic stability.

Nonetheless, some people asked why Forestry Education is important. Here, the Maryland Forestry Education Fund is crucial for several reasons, for example.

- **Sustainable Forest Management:** Forests play a vital role in maintaining ecological balance. Proper education and resources help forest landowners manage their lands sustainably, ensuring that forests continue to provide environmental, economic, and social benefits.
- **Enhanced Knowledge:** The fund enhances the capabilities of district forestry boards and local governments, equipping them with the knowledge to make informed decisions about forest conservation and management.

- **Innovative Practices:** By supporting businesses in testing innovative best management practices, the fund fosters the development and implementation of new techniques that can improve forest health and productivity.
- **Community Engagement:** Education and resources provided through the fund increase community awareness and involvement in forestry-related activities, promoting a collective effort towards forest conservation.
- **Economic Benefits:** Healthy forests contribute to the local economy by supporting industries such as timber, recreation, and tourism. Educating landowners and businesses on sustainable practices ensures long-term economic benefits.
- **Climate Mitigation:** Forests act as carbon sinks, absorbing CO2 from the atmosphere. Effective forest management can enhance this capability, contributing to climate change mitigation efforts.

Moreover, the Maryland Forestry Education Fund has several key purposes for example:

- **Educational Support:** To provide educational resources and programs to forest landowners, helping them manage their lands sustainably and effectively.
- **Capacity Building:** Enhancing the capabilities of district forestry boards will enable them to better serve their communities and promote healthy forest management practices.
- **Knowledge Enhancement:** To increase the knowledge of local governments about sustainable forestry, helping them make informed decisions that support forest conservation.
- **Innovative Practices:** To support businesses in testing and implementing innovative best management practices in forestry, promoting sustainable and efficient forest management techniques.
- **Sustainability:** To ensure that Maryland's forests remain healthy, sustainable, and beneficial for future generations, contributing to environmental, economic, and social well-being. These purposes collectively aim to foster a holistic approach to forest management, ensuring that the state's forests are well-managed and continue to provide essential benefits to the community and the environment.
- These purposes collectively aim to foster a holistic approach to forest management, ensuring that the state's forests are well-managed and continue to provide essential benefits to the community and the environment. Additionally, these purposes collectively aim to foster a holistic approach to forest management, ensuring that the state's forests are well-managed and continue to provide essential benefits to the community and the environment.

Finally, The Maryland Forestry Education Fund has a broader impact that extends beyond just forestry education. Here's how it influences various aspects of society and the environment:

1st. Cultural Heritage: Forests are often an integral part of cultural heritage for many indigenous communities. Education can help preserve traditional knowledge and practices, promoting respect and understanding.

2nd Health Benefits: Forests contribute to human health by providing clean air and water, and by serving as spaces for recreation and mental well-being. Education can highlight these benefits, encouraging greater public support for forest preservation.

Therefore, in essence, a Forest Education Fund is a strategic investment in our planet's future, fostering a well-informed public that values and actively participates in forest conservation efforts.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and I respectfully urge a favorable vote from the committee on SB467.

Witness-In addition to Bill Sponsor 467

A previous Maryland State Forester will submit written testimony.

In person panel

- Chair of the Maryland Forestry Boards Association (All Boards)
- Executive Director Sustainable Maryland Program Maryland Program at the University of Maryland
- The President of the Maryland Forestry Foundation