

SB 467 - testimony Senate GA final.pdf

Uploaded by: gary allen

Position: FAV

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

SB 467 - CBF - FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Matt Stegman

Position: FAV



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

*Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education*

Senate Bill 467

Maryland Forestry Education Fund - Mandatory Funding - Extension

Date: February 12, 2025

To: Budget & Taxation Committee

Position: **FAVORABLE**

From: Matt Stegman,
Maryland Staff Attorney

Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS** SB 467, which extends the time period during which the Governor will include an annual appropriation for the Maryland Forestry Education Fund. The Maryland Forestry Education Fund was created by legislation passed in 2023 but has not yet been capitalized. This bill recognizes both the importance of this new program and the fiscal realities facing our state by ensuring funding is available for the program in the future.

Much of Maryland's forest land is in the possession of private landowners. The decisions these landowners make can have significant consequences for the environment including water quality protection, fish and wildlife habitat and mitigation of greenhouse gases among others. The Maryland Forestry Education Fund will expand the scope of forest landowner training programs by providing up-to-date information on sustainable forestry practices and ecosystem services.

Landowners, forestry boards, and local governments can integrate this information into forest management plans that protect forest functions while maintaining profitability of the forest resource. CBF especially welcomes education on climate science, forest conservation, and urban forestry as these topics are often missing from traditional forest education programs.

Building local capacity, institutionalizing sustainability, and peer-to-peer education are all tenants of a successful model for regenerative natural resources management. The Chesapeake Bay Foundation continues to support efforts to improve forest stewardship through forestry education via options such as the Maryland Forestry Education Fund.

CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report on SB 467.

For more information, please contact Matt Stegman, Maryland Staff Attorney, at mstegman@cbf.org.

Maryland Office • Philip Merrill Environmental Center • 6 Herndon Avenue • Annapolis • Maryland • 21403

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. With over 200,000 members and e-subscribers, including 71,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.

SB467 Maryland Forestry Education Fund - Mandatory

Uploaded by: Michelle Dietz

Position: FAV

Wednesday, February 12, 2025

TO: Guy Guzzone, Chair of the Senate Budget and Tax Committee; and Committee Members
FROM: Michelle Dietz, The Nature Conservancy, Director of Government Relations; and Caitlin Kerr, The Nature Conservancy, State Policy Manager
POSITION: Support SB 467 Maryland Forestry Education Fund - Mandatory Funding – Extension

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) supports SB 467 offered by Senator Benson. This bill would extend funding for the Maryland Forestry Education Fund through 2031. TNC supported the establishment of the Maryland Forestry Education Fund in 2023 and we want to see the continuation of this successful program that enhances and expands the Maryland Forestry Foundation's education programs for forest landowners.

TNC is a global conservation organization working to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. In Maryland, our work focuses on delivering science-based, on-the-ground solutions that secure clean water and healthy living environments for our communities, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing resilience in the face of a changing climate. We are dedicated to a future where people and nature thrive together.

TNC and the American Forest Foundation jointly developed the Family Forest Carbon Program, which enables family forest owners to access carbon markets, empowering them to help address climate change while earning income from their land. This program has resulted in verifiable carbon reductions, economic benefits for rural areas, increased private investment in forests, and improved habitat and forest resiliency. We educate and support private and family landowners to advance forest stewardship while generating economic gains. We understand how beneficial and cost-effective programs like the Maryland Forestry Education Fund can be for our state.

The ongoing funding established in SB 467 would dedicate financial support for a variety of sustainable forestry activities for forestry boards in Maryland, along with providing sustained educational resources for local governments and landowners to support forest conservation. There are nearly 150,000 private and family forest owners in Maryland, amounting to 1.2 million acres of forested lands. These forests supply massive clean air and water benefits, provide habitat to a variety of species, are vital for climate resilience and are critical to Maryland communities' health and to the state's economy. In order to better manage these resources across the state, the Maryland Forestry Education Fund has expanded forest landowner training programs' scope to incorporate the latest information on sustainable forestry practices, ecosystem services, climate science, conservation, and more. By providing consistent learning opportunities for private land owners, district forestry boards and local governments, this learning can be integrated into state forest management plans. Improving forestry stewardship on privately owned lands is vital for maintaining biodiversity in Maryland and leading to more resilient forests across our state. SB 467 makes all this possible through dedicated funding.

The Nature Conservancy commends Senator Benson for investing in forest stewardship and education for private forest landowners across the state to support forest resilience and biodiversity for years to come.

Therefore, we urge a favorable report on SB 467.

Sustainable Maryland LOS SB 467 Hunninghake 2-7-2

Uploaded by: Mike Hunninghake

Position: FAV

The logo is an oval with a yellow background and a black border. Inside the oval, the words "SUSTAINABLE" and "MARYLAND" are written in bold, black, uppercase letters. Below "MARYLAND", the word "CERTIFIED" is written in white, uppercase letters on a red rectangular background.

SUSTAINABLE MARYLAND

CERTIFIED

HELPING COMMUNITIES INVEST TODAY FOR A MORE LIVABLE TOMORROW

Date: February 7, 2025

Committee: Senate Budget and Tax Committee

Bill: SB 467 – Maryland Forestry Education Fund

Position: Support

RE: Support of SB 467 – extension of the Maryland Forestry Education Fund

Dear Mr. Chairman and Committee members,

My name is Mike Hunninghake. I'm the Director of the Sustainable Maryland program at the University of Maryland.

The Sustainable Maryland program strongly supports the extension of the Maryland Forestry Education Fund. The need to expand Forestry Board capacity has significantly grown over the years as the number of people who own forest lands has multiplied and the threats to forest health increase. The Forestry Education Fund provides for better stewardship education and the ongoing capacity to deliver it, at a modest cost, enabling the Maryland Forestry Foundation to help the Forestry Boards and local governments achieve an even greater impact.

The Sustainable Maryland program has worked directly with Maryland's 157 incorporated municipalities for over 10 years, including in more than half of the state's urbanized towns and cities. Our experience providing technical assistance to these communities suggests that this funding helps increase the number of in-the ground projects at the local level. The Green Teams that we help organize and support, which include council members, public works staff, foresters and local residents, need to know what resources are available to them in terms of technical assistance and funding. The Forestry Education Fund functions as that essential conduit of information.

As a specific example, we have partnered with the Foundation to support the Urban Forestry Careers Camp, held at UMD in College Park, which helps foster young people's interest and

engagement in this field. This program offers high school students an opportunity to experience hands-on learning with industry professionals and experts in many forestry-related fields, and helps create a vital pipeline for the next generation of foresters in the state.

Sustainable Maryland has worked with the Maryland Forestry Foundation for many years, and we look forward to continuing to partner with them on similar projects across the state that are supported by the Forestry Education Fund.

I urge you to vote "Yes" in support SB 467 and the extension of the existing law.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Hunninghake".

Mike Hunninghake

Director

Sustainable Maryland

Environmental Finance Center - University of Maryland at College Park

www.sustainablemaryland.com

SB467 MD Forestry Education Fund

Uploaded by: Senator Benson Senator Benson

Position: FAV

JOANNE C. BENSON
Legislative District 24
Prince George's County

MAJORITY WHIP

Budget and Taxation Committee

Subcommittees

Education, Business, and Administration

Pensions

Chair, Procurement

Joint Committees

Audit and Evaluation Committee

Children, Youth, and Families

Ending Homelessness

Fair Practices and
State Personnel Oversight



James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 201
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3148
800-492-7122 Ext. 3148
Joanne.Benson@senate.state.md.us

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

SB0467 Forestry Education Fund LOI.docx (1).pdf

Uploaded by: Dana Phillips

Position: INFO

WES MOORE
Governor

ARUNA MILLER
Lieutenant Governor



HELENE GRADY
Secretary

MARC L. NICOLE
Deputy Secretary

Senate Bill 467 Maryland Forestry Education Fund- Mandatory Funding Extension

Statement of Information

DATE: February 12th 2025

COMMITTEE: Budget and Taxation

SUMMARY OF BILL:

This bill extends the funding mandate for the Maryland Forestry Education Fund (the Fund) through fiscal year 2031. Under current law, the Governor must include a \$250,000 appropriation to the Fund in the annual budget bill for fiscal years 2025 and 2026.

EXPLANATION:

At the start of FY 2025, the mandated appropriation for the Fund was eliminated through the Board of Public Work's cost containment exercise. Due to State fiscal constraints, the Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act submitted with the FY 2026 Governor's Allowance includes an item to eliminate the mandate for the Fund in FY 2026, therefore allowing a \$250,000 general fund reduction. Given the elimination of funding in both mandated years, the sunset of this mandate after FY 2026 would have no operational impact on the Department of Natural Resources or its partners. The extension of the mandate would have an impact on the State's general fund budget.

The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) is charged with submitting a balanced budget to the General Assembly annually and will be working with the General Assembly to achieve structural balance over the long-term. In light of current projected general fund deficits in fiscal 2027 forward, the Department urges caution in passing legislation to significantly increase general fund expenditures without commensurate decreases in other areas or additional revenue to fund the new activity. State government must be intentional, disciplined, and strategic with its allocation of State funding to ensure maximum impact toward priority outcomes.

Given the forecasted out-year deficits for the General Fund, it would be challenging for the State to manage this increase in spending

**For additional information, contact Dana Phillips at
(410) 260-6068 or dana.phillips@maryland.gov**

45 Calvert Street • Annapolis, MD 21401-1907

Tel: 410-260-7041 • Fax: 410-974-2585 • Toll Free: 1-800-705-3493 • TTY Users: Call via Maryland Relay

<http://dbm.maryland.gov>

