

**Anthony H. DiPaolo**  
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443-523-2951

Re: **Support** of SB946- Endangered Species- Incidental Taking- Bats

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagen, and Members of the Education, Energy & Environment Committee,

My name is Anthony DiPaolo, and I am a Maryland licensed forester. Born and raised in the Maryland DC metro area, I grew up playing in the forests and fields of this state where I developed a love for everything outdoors. I have fond memories of hunting deer and quail in southern Prince George's County as a boy and pheasants in Carroll County as a young man almost fifty years ago. After graduating high school, I attended Virginia Tech where I earned my BS in Forestry in 1982.

After college, I ran back to Maryland beginning my forestry career as a park naturalist at Piney Run Park in Carroll County. I later obtained a position with the Maryland Forest Service as an Assistant Project Forester in Allegany and Garrett Counties. While I loved the mountains of western Maryland, I transferred to the Eastern Shore where I have been working and playing in the fields, forests and waters for the past 38 years. After my stints in outdoor recreation and service forestry, I spent almost thirty years working in forest industry procuring wood for both a family-owned sawmill and a large specialty paper company. The last few years I have spent doing forestry consulting work. I have tried my best to help forest landowners achieve their management objectives for their property. I have worked with small landowners who might own as little as ten acres to large conservation organizations who own and manage thousands of acres. Landowner objectives vary as much as personalities. Maybe someone just wants to control invasives, or install bluebird boxes and a hiking trail, while another is a hunter and wants to improve turkey habitat. I even run into folks who are still interested in tree farming for profit! Despite having different goals, they all care deeply about their land. Almost every landowner I've worked with has this passion and appreciation for the land. A true connection to it. Although I am speaking only for myself here, I have tried to be active within the conservation community. I am a member and past Chair of the Md./De. Division of the Society of American Foresters, member and past vice president of the Maryland Forests Association, District Supervisor with the Worcester Soil Conservation District, member of the Worcester Forestry Board, member of the Sustainable Forestry Council, member of the state Licensing Board for Foresters, and board member of the Lower Shore Land Trust. I apologize for being long winded, but I want you to understand my background. I feel this letter speaks for all those folks who believe in sound forestry, that I've worked with over these years.

As a professional land manager, I have always believed to have healthy, sustainable forests we must have a healthy sustainable forest industry. Whether it is wetland restoration being done by Delaware Wild Lands in the great cypress swamp on the Delaware/ Maryland line, the Nature Conservancy's biodiversity restoration projects on the Nassawango Creek preserve, or private landowners restoring early successional habitat for quail and songbirds, and even those guys who just enjoy tree farming. Sustainable forestry cannot exist without a viable forest industry. Maryland has been a leader in promoting conservation efforts through programs like Rural Legacy, that provide permanent conservation easements. Designed to promote working landscapes and maintain rural economies, these programs have been a success but will not achieve their objectives if we cannot manage our forests. Most loggers and other contractors doing

this valuable conservation work are small businesses with five or less employees. The cost of inputs and equipment continues to increase while they operate with narrow profit margins. Most would not survive if they could not find work for up to six months of the year, which, I understand, could be possible under the federal guidelines with no HCP. I do not believe most of these smaller family-owned sawmills, who might have thirty or so employees, could survive either. These small businesses are the backbone of Maryland's forest industry.

I want to express my strong support for SB946 / HB894, which aims to add the Northern Long-eared Bat (NLEB) and other bat species to the list of species in Maryland authorized to have a "Habitat Protection Plan" (HCP) and incidental take permit issued by the Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources. This legislation is critical to ensuring conservation efforts are balanced with the needs of farms, forests, and property management projects. The proposed legislation does not mandate the creation of an HCP but preserves the ability to establish one if necessary. This would provide a structured framework for reasonable conservation measures while allowing essential land management activities to continue.

While bat populations are in decline, the primary cause is white-nose syndrome—a devastating fungal disease that spreads during winter hibernation. Land use activities, including forestry, are not the driving force behind this decline. Bats are present statewide. Endangered Species Law closely scrutinizes any activities that might impact them, no matter how small the risk. For example, although less than 1% of Maryland's forestland is harvested annually, the potential regulatory impacts could be significant without the passage of this bill.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has already outlined conservation measures to mitigate potential risks, and federal law allows for incidental take permits and HCPs to provide clarity and structure for compliance. By passing this legislation, Maryland would align itself with the federal Endangered Species Act and join 21 other states with proactive bat management plans.

It is also essential to recognize that this issue extends beyond forestry. The listing of bat species has broad implications, affecting activities such as the maintenance or removal of structures with bats, tree removal, land clearing, utility right-of-way maintenance, road construction, and bridge and large culvert replacement. These routine activities could face unnecessary delays or restrictions without proper planning measures.

For these reasons, I urge you to **support SB946, which would** allow for responsible conservation planning while ensuring that necessary land management activities can continue.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anthony H. DiPaolo". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Anthony H. DiPaolo, Maryland LPF #309