



Maryland Association of Forest Conservancy District Boards

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Washington Grove, MD 20880
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Testimony in Favor of HB-530 Joli McCathran

My name is Joli McCathran, and I am the President of the Maryland Association of Forestry Boards. I am testifying on behalf of the 24 Maryland counties Forestry Boards, including the City of Baltimore, in support for HB-530 to allow the funding for the already established Maryland Forestry Education Fund. This bill is for the continuance of an existing law passed in 2023.

The Forestry Boards, all members being volunteers, was established in 1943 by law in Maryland to assist the State's Forest Park and Wildlife Service, now the Department of Natural Resources, to provide outreach to landowners on forest management practices on privately owned woodlands state-wide. It is the job of these boards to offer these services to education and assist in working with Maryland's forest landowners. The Boards have never been funded at the state level.

The purpose in HB-530 is to build the capacity of existing tools such as the Forestry Boards by strengthening the Maryland Forestry Foundation (an independent 501c3). This is to engage the Forestry Boards, community foresters and the Department of Natural Resources to engage private forest landowners and others (HOAs) more fully on the latest best management practices for forest health and the incentives for good stewardship.

The modest funds provided by HB-530 are a good step forward to strengthening the education of the over 250 forestry board volunteers to better serve the citizens of Maryland in attaining their goals. Now the Board services expand beyond just the production of wood products and cover such concerns as restoration of the Chesapeake Bay and management for climate benefits, addressing urban and suburban environment as well as rural areas, and education the public.

HB-530 will enhance the ability and effectiveness of forestry board members in collaboration with DNR and the Maryland Forestry Foundation created to assist in achieving our mission, which is: *"To promote the stewardship, conservation, and sustainable use of Maryland's Forest Resource."* I strongly seek your support of HB-530 and ask for your favorable Report