



# Maryland Forests Association, Inc.

P.O. Box 332

Linkwood, MD 21835

410-463-1755

*Maryland's voice for forest, wildlife, and natural resource management*

## **Comments on HB 1560**

### **Before the House Committee on Environment and Transportation**

**March 11, 2026**

#### **Mr. Chairman and members of the committee,**

The Maryland Forests Association represents forest products manufacturers, loggers, forest landowners, and other forest enthusiasts across the state. We are happy to offer these comments on HB 1560, which seeks to establish a pilot program that would offer financial incentives to land owners for providing ecosystem services from their forested lands.

This is a concept that we can support. It is true that forests help ensure clean water, clean air, wildlife, and recreational opportunities, for which private forest landowners are not compensated. It is very much a worthwhile concept to explore to determine whether there is a way to provide economic incentives to these landowners and encourage them to maintain their forested lands so that the ecosystem services that flow from them can continue.

However, this is a complicated issue, and to our knowledge, no other state or entity has developed such programs. To do this properly, an effort in Maryland needs to involve forest landowners, conservation groups, forestry and wildlife specialists, and agency staffs. We are not comfortable simply handing the task over to the Department of Natural Resources without some guidance on what the objectives and program will look like. Many questions need to be answered, including how to measure and monetize ecosystem services, how to monitor them, and what the payment structure for private landowners would entail, including not only payment amounts but also the time periods for which they would apply.

MFA would certainly be willing to participate in developing a workable and equitable program to monetize ecosystem services from forests. Any direction from the General Assembly that could encourage that effort would be useful.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our views.