

Hello Representatives,

I am in strong support of 2024 – H7293 AN ACT RELATING TO AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY -- OLD GROWTH FOREST PROTECTION ACT.

The reasoning behind my support of H7293:

- Old growth forests are critical to the preservation of biodiversity. Due to the fact that we are in a biodiversity crisis, with the number of species and organisms decreasing rapidly worldwide within recent years, the protection of native species has become increasingly important. Native species are key to protecting the current biodiversity. Trees like beech, white oak, and red maple, which are all native to forests in Rhode Island, serve as important parts of the ecosystems they are part of, providing shelter, food, and oxygen to the organisms living in and around them.
- Old growth forests provide large and healthy ecosystem structures and habitats for many species. Without protection, many factors put the trees at risk of removal or logging, which would wreak havoc on ecosystems and native species. Species native to Rhode Island, such as white tailed deer, raccoons, squirrels, red foxes, coyotes, eastern cottontails, and many species of birds rely on these old growth forests for survival.
- Old growth forests, true to their name, take hundreds of years to develop from pioneer species, to climax species, like the white oak. These species provide stability and resources to the ecosystems, and can make them more resistant to disaster. Lack of legal protection puts them at risk of destruction, which would take over a hundred years to resolve.
- Failure to protect old growth forests will result in the loss of critical carbon sinks. Trees and forests hold carbon dioxide, an extremely harmful greenhouse gas that would otherwise go into the atmosphere, contributing to global warming and thus, climate change. These old growth forests can help reduce carbon emissions, and will continue to do so for hundreds of years, provided they aren't cut down.
- Cutting of trees and logging contributes to ecosystem destruction and decay, causing increased soil erosion, waterlogging, and runoff into waterways, which can cause algae blooms, eutrophication, and more, putting both human and animal lives at risk.
- Old growth forests are a source of cultural benefit. New England is known for its beautiful forests, especially the vibrant red and orange of leaves during the fall. Failure to protect them would take this beautiful nature away from future generations.

Woodlands in New England, and within Rhode Island, are under threat of ecological destruction through logging and clearcutting. In a time where the health of our Earth is critical to our continued survival on this planet, it is devastating to see the lack of progress. Trees being cut for commercial purposes, monetary benefit, or just plain ignorance of homeowners and others to the importance of trees and forests are adding yet another pebble to the rockslide of climate change. Without change, the damage to old growth forests within our state could be irreversible.

Please, support this vital Act. Make it a priority. We no longer have the liberty to push this issue aside to deal with another day, when old growth forests are being clear cut, destroyed, and damaged worldwide. As silly as it may sound, the survival of these trees is critical to our own, and the survival of the majority of species within the state. Putting this act into law is a necessity.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sophia Buchanan

Barrington, RI