



Ecumenical Leaders' Group

4 East University Parkway
Baltimore, Maryland 21218

February 14, 2018

Chairman Barve and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee
House Office Building
6 Bladen St.
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Forest Conservation Act Amendments – House Bill 766

Dear Delegate Barve et Al:

We are writing to express our support for the Forest Conservation Act amendments - HB 766. As faith leaders who respect the sanctity of the Earth and the whole web of life, we strongly reject societal trends toward unfettered development at the expense of the next generation who count on us to be good stewards of the Earth today.

Thou shall not steal trees from the next generation.

Children once played easily in trees in their back yard, at a park down the street, or at Grandma's house; but today, forests are hard to find. When was the last time you spotted a child climbing a tree? Over the past eight years, over 14,000 acres of forest have been lost to development. Forests play a crucial role in stabilizing soil, improve water quality, offer important mammal habitats, and reduce ambient air temperatures with cooling shade.

The Forest Conservation Act amendments will help protect priority forests for future generations. The loss of tree canopy is felt by the general public and future generations, while developers profit from transforming land away from its natural state. Over the past three years, thousands of people of faith have planted over 13,000 trees at their churches, synagogues, and temples. **However, for every 1 acre of forest planted by the faith community, Maryland lost 40 acres.**

Society cannot keep up with this pace of forest decimation. We need your help. Please support Forest Conservation Act amendments to strengthen it so that we can truly protect forests and reverse this alarming trend. Will you help us fight for sustained forest cover by supporting this bill? Please vote in support of the Forest Conservation Act amendments.

Sincerely,

Reverend Denise Mason Bullitt
Interim Conference Minister
United Church of Christ

Bishop La Trelle Miller-Easterling
United Methodist Church

Bishop William J. Gohl, Jr.
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

The Right Reverend Chilton Knudsen
Assistant Bishop for the Episcopal Diocese of Maryland

The Most Reverend Denis Madden
Auxiliary Bishop for the Archdiocese of Baltimore

The Right Reverend Eugene Sutton
Bishop for the Episcopal Diocese of Maryland

Reverend Jacqueline Taylor
General Presbyter for the Presbytery of Baltimore (PCUSA)