



*March 1, 2023*

*To: Senate Education, Energy and Environment Committee*

*From: Gary Allen, President, Maryland Forestry Foundation*

*Re: Support of SB 526*

*Mr. Chairman and members, I am Gary G Allen, President of Maryland Forestry Foundation.*

*I was chair of the Municipal League legislative committee when the original FCA bill was passed.*

*FAC was meant to stem the loss of tree cover, which had proceeded at a glaring pace in the 1980s when over 1000 acres a month were being lost. It was slowed but not eliminated, so two decades Later as Chair of the Sustainable Forestry Council we proposed a NO NET LOSS goal which the state accepted.*

*Earlier today, you learned No net loss has yet to be achieved!*

*We find that some of the tools provided in the FCA bill have resulted in expanded tree protection but still result in the loss of overall forest cover and tree cover loss. The foundation strongly supports the protection and preservation of existing forests and tree cover, but we think the use of that option has permitted forest loss in significant areas.*

*We need some new guardrails in the FCA to incentivize afforestation and reduce the value of preservation, specifically where the protected area is at low risk for development.*

*SB526 is drafted to bring that option into better balance.*

*Protection is an excellent option, but afforestation should be a priority in the face of site plans where significant loss of forest cover will occur.*

*The Bill, as drafted, does not provide new incentives for landowners to plant trees. That need must still be addressed; however, in the context of the Bill before us, a*

*new balance on the use of the tools provided in FAC to encourage both the planting of trees to replace those lost and the preservation of existing forest cover can be achieved.*

*The foundation asks for a favorable report on SB 526*

*Thank you.*