



The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky , Chair and  
The Honorable Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chair  
Maryland Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee  
Miller Senate Office Building, 2 West Wing  
11 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401 – 1991

Re: SB0737 The Comprehensive Conservation Finance Act of 2021  
Date: February 24<sup>th</sup> 2021

Dear Chairman Pinsky, Vice Chairwoman Kagan, and Members of the Committee,

The Forestland Group (TFG) is a sustainable timber investment company based in Chapel, Hill North Carolina that has owned and managed forest land in Maryland’s Chesapeake Bay watershed since 2003.

TFG’s investment vehicles harness the dynamics of natural forest management to provide environmental impact and stable, long-term financial performance. TFG delivers large-scale climate change mitigation, strategic conservation outcomes, and non-correlated portfolio returns through the ownership and management of working forests. TFG is an industry-leading seller of forest carbon offsets with a 25-year track record of timberland investing guided by the core value of sustainability. The Forestland Group earns annual third-party certification for its sustainable forest management across 99.77% of its acres.

Both public and private capital are required to accomplish global and domestic land conservation goals. Clear policy frameworks provide *diverse funding sources*, *market demand*, and *incentives* for cross-sector investment in environmental stewardship. Regulatory programs from local to national scales such as US Department of Treasury’s New Markets Tax Credit, California’s Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (AB 32), and the Maryland Forest Conservation Management Act enable The Forestland Group to leverage more private financing to deliver more benefits from natural forests. That is what makes proposals like the Comprehensive Conservation Finance Act (CCFA) in Maryland so important.

The CCFA is a suite of innovative legislative changes that build on Maryland’s significant leadership crafting policy solutions to ensure the health of the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Combined, these and other changes represent a powerful approach to stretch public dollars and increase the viability of cross-sector investments that support healthy forests.

- *Diverse funding sources*: Expanding applications of State Revolving Funds for Clean Water and Drinking Water opens up additional and necessary sources of investment for sustainable land management.
- *Market demand*: Adjustments to Maryland’s ground-breaking Forest Conservation Act, such as prioritizing forest mitigation banks and creating a competitive process for allocating state dollars, drives demand for efficient restoration and maintenance of state-wide forest cover.
- *Incentives*: Voluntary carbon markets are becoming more robust, with more buyers and more consistent pricing for credits. The CCFA facilitates partnerships between landowners, non-profits, and for-profits to develop voluntary carbon market projects and access incentives for land protection and stewardship.

The Forestland Group is proud of our rich history in the state of Maryland. At the time of execution (2002-2003), the 50,000 acres TFG put under easement on our Eastern Shore property was the largest conservation transaction in the state. The Forestland Group was the largest private landowner in Maryland for multiple years. We look forward to finding more opportunities to accomplish large-scale natural forest management through the enabling policy framework proposed in the CCFA. TFG gives this bill its strong recommendation.



Sincerely,

Blake Stansell  
Chief Executive Officer

CC: Senator Jim Rosapepe  
Senator Guy Guzzone  
Senator Sarah Elfreth  
Senator Will Smith  
Senator Ron Young