

Testimony of Stephen Marley on behalf of the Advocates for Herring Bay Regarding Bill 68-19: Subdivision and Development: Forest Conservation October 7, 2019

Herring Bay owes much of its success as a maritime economy to the 7,000 acres of forest that stabilize its wetlands and steep slopes, protect headwater streams, and mitigate damage to local properties from flooding. Because of their quality and location, a large portion of Herring Bay's forests have been designated by the state as green infrastructure hubs or corridors and targeted for preservation in the county's watershed assessment (*see maps below*).

The fate of Herring Bay's forests depends on the incentives in county law. Making it cheap and easy to clear-cut trees discourages private preservation efforts and burdens taxpayers with the cost of mitigating forest loss. In South County, for example, the government has had to spend millions of dollars on last-minute purchases to save prime forests from development, such as those at Franklin Point, Waysons Corner, and Turtle Run.

We urgently need a new paradigm for valuing land, one that recognizes the absorptive and cooling capacity of forests. Provisions aimed at preserving priority forests are especially important for Herring Bay, since roughly 60 percent of our forested greenways are unprotected.

We urge you to redirect the county's statutory incentives in favor of preserving forests, not treating trees as a disposable commodity. The resiliency of our communities depends on it.



