



*Forming Faithful Stewards,
Caring for Sacred Waters*

501 Sixth Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21403

February 7, 2019

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

House Bill 272 – State and Local Forest Conservation Fund (Forest Fee-In-Lieu)
Position: **SUPPORT**

Dear Chairman Barve and Committee Members:

I am writing to you on behalf of Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake to express our support of House Bill 272 to **Fix the Fee-in-Lieu System for Forest Conservation**.

Our broken Fee-in-Lieu system is literally stealing trees from the next generation. From 2009 to 2017, over 14,000 acres of forest have been lost due to development. That's equivalent to 11,000 football fields! Forests play a crucial role in stabilizing soil, improving air and water quality, offering important mammal habitats, and reducing ambient air temperatures with cooling shade.

Yet the Fee-in-Lieu system is failing to sustain healthy forests. Here's why:

- When development occurs, if it will remove forests, the developer is required to replant trees onsite or somewhere else in the county, and if they can't, they can pay a fee to the county so that the county can replant the trees. But the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, found that counties were not replanting trees, and in most cases the fee-in-lieu money was just sitting there, unused.
- When the money collected *is* used to replant, sometimes is not at an acre for acre ratio. For example, if a developer pays a fee for the removal of 3 acres of forest, the county might use that fee to *only* replant 1-2 acres because that's all that is feasible at that time or with the amount of money collected.

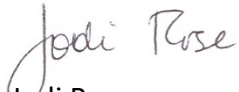
The system is broken and is failing the next generation. Thou shall not steal trees from the next generation. Attached is a list of people-of-faith from throughout Maryland who have signed on in support of this bill. They are all fighting for their children, grandchildren, nieces, and nephews who are voiceless in this battle for cooler air and a healthy environment.

This bill will make the following adjustments to the Fee-In-Lieu system:

1. Require forest bank mitigation before fee-in-lieu, when banking is available
2. Require that there is an acre for acre replacement with the fee-in-lieu funds
3. Require that counties not accept fees if they have no plan for replanting - this would halt permit issuance until a replanting plan is in-place. If they cannot accept the fees, they will be required to go back to the developer and require the developer to come up with a replanting plan before the permit is issued.

Please fight to protect our forests by supporting House Bill 272 to Fix the Fee-in-Lieu system.

Sincerely,



Jodi Rose

Executive Director

Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake (not a member-based organization)