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In addition to being a signatory to a joint letter submitted to this Committee in support of this bill, I am here to offer my support for this bill from three different perspectives:

- as a member of Long View Forest
- as a consulting forester serving clients in Vermont, and
- as a Member of the Forest Stewards Guild Membership and Policy Council

### **Long View Forest**

We are an employee-owned firm, based in Westminster. We are entering our 20<sup>th</sup> year in business and currently have 21 full-time, year-round employees and 7 part-time or seasonal employees. I lead our forestry division of 3 VT licensed foresters and 2 forest technicians. Together, we effectively manage ~20,000 acres of forestland- mostly in Windham and Windsor Counties.

Our company works as a team of foresters, loggers, site work experts, and invasive plant control specialists as we strive to optimize outcomes for the forest and for our clients. As a member of Long View, I think I can offer a unique perspective on why larger intact and connected forests are important to our clients and to our company:

- When we survey and interview our clients, privacy, the beauty of the larger forest, and wildlife observation are the main reasons they choose to own forestland. Larger forest blocks immediately provide and maintain these values. Most of our clients, whether they live here full-time or not, want a particular experience that Vermont offers- and most of it is forest-based. Forest fragmentation threatens the availability of this experience. Smart development, guided by principles as laid out in the bill, can help more people enjoy these amenities without ruining the very values they are after.
- Planning and working at larger scales is important- for ecological, financial, and operational reasons. Fragmentation of forests adds administrative and operational costs and complications to management. Particularly, the fixed costs of management that aren't necessarily tied to acreage, such as mapping, and the costs to move and mobilize machinery are examples of how small sized woodlots become increasingly challenging to manage.
- Invasive plants and insects are growing concerns in our area. These tend to flourish along fragmentation corridors. Large interior forest areas and their plant associations are particularly vulnerable to the ecological havoc that the introduction of these invasives, via forest fragmentation, brings.
- As a growing company seeking to attract and retain a talented workforce in Vermont, Long View relies on the forest as a place to work, but also as an amenity attraction for the people who work in it. I came to Vermont because of the forests- because I like to work in them, but also because I like to bike, bird watch, and hunt in them- all experiences that depend on large, intact forest blocks.

## **Consulting Forester**

As a consulting forester, I often start out talking with clients about trees, but then quickly branch out into landscape architecture and design, forest infrastructure planning, Use Value Appraisal, estate planning and other topics.

Recently, we were hired to write a forest management plan for a ~100 acre parcel where the landowner was planning to develop a series of lots based around a shared driveway network and a shared forest asset to be held by a landowner association. The project fell apart due to local opposition to project design before it got to permitting.

I wish that there had been a thoughtful way the developer could have started their design process with the principles of avoiding, minimizing and mitigating forest fragmentation impacts. They weren't required to, and I think to a large extent, this contributed to the downfall of the project as opposition easily coalesced around the negative aspects of the project.

Imagine, if instead of a traditional subdivision plan, the developer had started with "This property connects a series of important forest habitat blocks identified by the state of Vermont as important to forest connectivity and wildlife habitat. However, this area is also a smart place to develop a subdivision project that appeals to people looking to experience the beauty of Vermont and contribute their tax dollars to keeping it that way. This project clusters development, creates house lots with adjacent, high value forest amenities, keeps forests and forest function intact, and preserves a piece of forest that is of a scale that can actually be managed to maintain or enhance wildlife habitat, grow valuable forest products, and serve as the beautiful background to a place someone will call home."

H.233 would add the requirement that such a developer examine and plan for forest connectivity in their development proposal. I think it would help reduce forest fragmentation while also redirecting development pressure towards sustainable development that could help rural economies while keeping intact the very character and attractive qualities of our landscape that make people want to develop here in the first place. I think it is key that this bill is not about stopping development, but rather about ensuring that development is done wisely in a Vermont context.

## **Forest Stewards Guild**

The Forest Stewards Guild is a national, professional organization that practices and promotes responsible forestry as a means of sustaining the integrity of forest ecosystems and the human communities dependent upon them. I am one of nine, nationally elected members of the Guild's Membership and Policy Council.

Based on input from our Professional Membership, 31 of whom live and practice in Vermont, we have developed a Policy Statement on Forest Conservation and Connectivity. It highlights the Guild's support for the things we are talking about here today- the values of connected forests, larger forest blocks, and the importance of this connectivity, both practically and philosophically, to practitioners working on the landscape and to humans trying to live responsibly within it.

Guided by the principles outlined in this Statement, I would like to offer the Guild's support for this legislation as we believe it will help further our collective goals of keeping forests as forests to benefit the ecological and human communities that depend on them.