

**Senate Finance Committee  
HB 33 Interested Party Testimony  
Kathryn Downie, Consulting Forester  
May 18, 2023**

Chair Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding HB 33. I will be focusing on how the budget impacts Ohio woodland owners and the health of Ohio's forests.

My name is Kathryn Downie, and I own Legacy Forestry Consulting, LLC. As a private consulting forester, I am a member of both professional organizations for foresters, the Ohio Society of American Foresters (OSAF) and the Ohio Chapter of the Association of Consulting Foresters (OACF). In addition, I am an Ohio licensed pesticide applicator, Ohio Tree Farm inspector, Ohio Forestry Association Board Member, and Camp Canopy instructor. I am here today on behalf of OSAF and OACF to ask you to reinstate funding for the Ohio Division of Forestry that was cut from Substitute House Bill 33.

SAF and ACF were originally formed to set and maintain high standards for the forestry profession, while also ensuring sustainable management of the resource. These organizations provide continual training and professional development opportunities to their members, increase public awareness of the forestry profession, and strive to advance forest science. They are also an essential resource for private landowners to connect with forestry professionals. There are currently 48 consulting foresters listed on [ohioresourceconnection.com](http://ohioresourceconnection.com) that landowners can contact for assistance.

As a consulting forester, I work with landowners across our great state to ensure their forest management objectives are being achieved. Oftentimes, management goals are multifaceted and extend into other natural resource areas, such as wildlife habitat, water quality, soil conservation, land management and recreation. It is my responsibility to ensure that we are being good stewards of the land through educated observations and data collection, advocating for our landowners' interests, and offering professional, unbiased advice when improvements are deemed necessary.

With nearly seven million acres of private forest across the state, there are not enough private consulting foresters to adequately manage and advocate for our only renewable resource. Unfortunately, this leaves many landowners without

professional guidance when making decisions about their property. Ohio Division of Forestry's state service foresters are critical contact points for landowners, and they work in tandem with private consulting foresters by providing sound forest management advice, general forestry outreach, connections to cost-share programs, and Ohio Forest Tax Law. The funding requested in the Governor's budget would have enabled state service foresters to double the number of landowners they assist annually.

It is important to work toward the management of all Ohio woodlands to cultivate proper growing conditions for Ohio's native species, prevent the spread of invasive species, protect against water and wind erosion, supply critical habitat for wildlife, and provide climate solutions. Ohio does not have the capacity to attain this goal without more foresters assisting landowners. OSAF and OACF are committed to growing the number of private foresters, and we ask that the State of Ohio also commit to growing the number of state service foresters.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments as you consider changes to the state's main operating budget.