

My name is Zachary Russell and wanted to give some perspective of the challenges of running a small tree farm and as a family member that will be responsible for running the farm. Running a small family tree farm is very difficult. You generally do not have much if any revenue and every bit of revenue is important which is why I am in opposition to HB 2379. When farming trees as a small woodland owner, you generally get one harvest per property per lifetime. In just about all decisions we make, we are often making decisions for the generations after us.

For example, I have bought some forest land to try and expand our family tree farm and preserve our forests, and have owned it for over a decade without any income from it. More importantly, I do not know when we would actually be able to harvest. Keeping the expenses low and the taxes low when we do harvest helps us to continue to invest in what we think is important, sustainable stewardship of our forest. We try to provide clean water, clean air, store carbon, provide wildlife habitat and produce fiber.

It is not a glorious or highly profitable undertaking, but it is rewarding. There are not many people, especially younger, that have the patience to hold a piece of property for a lifetime. It takes patience and long term thinking. Reducing the revenues with the proposed Severance Tax will make it harder than it is today to keep these forests intact, and reduced revenues to the landowner we will encourage landowners to eventually succumb to either large housing developments or selling to large commercial revenue driven ownership groups versus long term stewardship. Thank you for your time.