

## House Resolution

By: Representative Gilliard and ...

### A RESOLUTION

Encouraging the State of Georgia's endorsement of the Stand4Forests platform; and for other purposes.

WHEREAS, the State of Georgia endeavors to be a good steward of the state's resources and capacity for economic development; and

WHEREAS, standing forests provide our communities with services crucial to successful economic development including clean air, fresh water, protection from flooding and drought, and habitat that supports diverse species and a wide array of recreational and tourism activities; and

WHEREAS, there is scientific consensus regarding the reality of climate change and the connection between the degradation and loss of forests and the combustion of carbon-based fuels with increasing greenhouse gasses that are causing a warming of the planet; and

WHEREAS, climate science shows that southeastern U.S. cities, including those in Georgia, are particularly vulnerable to climate change and pose daily risks to businesses, neighborhoods, infrastructure, transportation, and ecosystems in the region; and

WHEREAS, climate change related extreme heat and extreme weather events are expected to increasingly impact infrastructure and human health throughout the state; and

WHEREAS, the combined climate disruption effects of frequent extreme rainfall and sea level rise are already increasing flood frequency and impacting property values, municipal credit ratings, and infrastructure viability, particularly in Georgia's coastal regions; and

WHEREAS, Georgia's coastal plain and inland low-lying regions support a rapidly growing population, robust tourism and film industries, essential nursery habitats for recreational and commercially important fisheries, and important cultural resources that are highly vulnerable to climate change impacts; and

WHEREAS, changing temperature extremes, wildfire patterns, rising sea levels, hurricanes, floods, droughts, and warming ocean temperatures are expected to redistribute species and greatly modify ecosystems, resulting in an increased risk to the ecological resources that people depend on for their livelihood, protection, and well-being; and

WHEREAS, the reduced frequency and intensity of cold winter temperature extremes are allowing tropical and subtropical invasive species to move northward and replace more temperate species which may negatively impact Georgia's agriculture industry; and

WHEREAS, rising temperatures and increases in the duration and intensity of drought are projected to

increase wildfire occurrence and reduce the effectiveness of prescribed fire practices; and

WHEREAS, the industrial-scale use of wood pellets for electricity releases more carbon per unit of electricity generated than coal or other carbon-based fuels, is not a carbon neutral form of energy, and will contribute to the rate of climate change and the severity of its impacts; and

WHEREAS, growing existing forests intact to their ecological potential serves the greatest public good by maximizing benefits such as carbon sequestration, and ecosystem services such as water and air quality, flood and erosion control, public health benefits, biodiversity, low impact recreation, and scenic beauty; and

WHEREAS, in 2018 ecosystem services provided by wetland forests alone were valued at \$67.3 billion; and, when forests are destroyed, degraded, converted to plantations, or harvested to burn for bioenergy, their climate, environmental, and community benefits disappear; and

WHEREAS, the State of Georgia recognizes that tourism, film production, commercial fishing, insurance, real estate, agriculture and other key industries depend on a healthy environment in order to continue serving as major economic drivers that benefit the current and future residents, property owners, and visitors of Georgia; and

WHEREAS, opportunities for economic development by communities of color, indigenous communities, low-income, and rural populations are disproportionately and negatively impacted by climate change and the health, economic, and social costs associated with industrial practices; and

WHEREAS, the State of Georgia recognizes that it is economically, socially, and ecologically responsible for expanding forest protection, restoring degraded forests, reducing consumption, and transitioning to truly clean, nonpolluting sources of renewable energy, such as solar and wind energy, in order to enhance economic development and tourism opportunities, reduce risk to the environment, and support the economic health of Georgia citizens;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE that the members of this body encourage the State of Georgia's endorsement of the Stand4Forests platform to support permanent expansion of protected lands, a ban on subsidies for false clean energy solutions, accurate and transparent emissions reduction, investment in forest protection, transitional economic development opportunities for communities currently dependent on extractive forestry practices, and provisions for more options and resources for landowners and municipalities to keep forests standing and thriving.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Speaker of the House is authorized and directed to make an appropriate copy of this resolution available for distribution to all members of the Georgia General Assembly.