

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow  
Chairwoman  
Senate Agriculture Committee

The Honorable Glenn “GT” Thompson  
Chairman  
House Agriculture Committee

The Honorable John Boozman  
Ranking Member  
Senate Agriculture Committee

The Honorable David Scott  
Ranking Member  
House Agriculture Committee

March 30, 2023

The Honorable Chairwomen Stabenow, Ranking Member Boozman, Chairman Thompson, and Ranking Member Scott:

The signatories below urge you to include language and funding in the 2023 Farm Bill that directs the Secretary of Agriculture to create a grant program to establish immersive pathway training programs focused on the workforce development needs of the forestry industry.<sup>1</sup>

The sustainability and competitive viability of the forest products industry relies on an intact, healthy wood supply chain, including labor. Industry-wide labor shortages are limiting modernization and growth investments in existing and new forest product manufacturing facilities. For example, the existing labor pool in the logging sector is aging rapidly. Less than 25 percent of logging business owners are under 40 years old. Fifty-five is the average age of owners/operators, and approximately 30 percent of owners/operators are planning to leave the business within five years.

Regional forest industry training hubs would allow participants to stay in or near their communities, which reduces the cost to participate and affords program developers increased flexibility in adapting training curricula to meet regional needs through ties to local forest product employers. The forest products industry struggles to find a trained and skilled workforce at all levels, with an estimated 40-60 percent of young adults leaving rural forest-based economies for employment opportunities elsewhere.

Key components of a forestry workforce pathway program include education opportunities to expand high school forestry curriculum, workforce diversification that provides increased awareness of career pathways in the forest products industry, and training programs that offer residential short duration (240 hours) in forest operations and wood product industries.

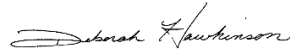
Forest product industry manufacturing facilities are in regions where they are the primary economic base for rural forest-based economies. They serve as a key employers and provide good-paying direct and indirect jobs. The forest products industry, including loggers and haulers, primary and secondary manufacturers, pulp and paper mills, sawmills, and engineered wood

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<sup>1</sup> A Forest in the Farm Bill Coalition Recommendation

products, is one of the largest manufacturing sectors in the U.S., sustaining nearly 930,000 families and contributing \$353 billion annually to the U.S. economy.

We respectfully request that you include language in the Rural Development Title of the 2023 Farm Bill that directs the Sec. of Agriculture to create a grant program to establish immersive pathway training programs focused on the workforce development needs of the forestry industry.



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**Signatories:**

Alabama Forestry Association  
American Forest Foundation  
American Forest Resource Council  
Arkansas Timber Producers Association  
Associated Logging Contractors of Idaho  
Association of Consulting Foresters  
Black Hills Forest Resource Association  
California Forestry Association  
Colorado Timber Industry Association  
Composite Panel Association  
Decorative Hardwoods Association  
Empire State Forest Products Association  
Federal Forest Resource Coalition  
Forest Resources Association  
Forestry Association of South Carolina  
Forest Workforce Training Institute  
Georgia Forestry Association  
Great Lakes Timber Producers Association  
Hardwood Federation  
Intermountain Forest Association

Kentucky Forest Industries Association  
Louisiana Forestry Association  
Louisiana Logging Council  
Maple Flooring Manufacturers Association  
Maryland Forests Association  
Massachusetts Forest Alliance  
Minnesota Forest Industries  
Minnesota Timber Producers Association  
Mississippi Forestry Association  
Missouri Forest Products Association  
National Association of State Foresters  
National Hardwood Lumber Association  
National Wood Flooring Association  
Northeastern Loggers' Association  
Oregon Women in Timber  
Ohio Forestry Association  
Pennsylvania Forestry Association  
South Carolina Timber Producers Association  
Southern Loggers Cooperative  
Tennessee Forestry Association  
Texas Forestry Association  
Treated Wood Council  
Southeastern Lumber Manufacturers Association  
Washington Forest Protection Association  
West Virginia Forestry Association