

Testimony Concerning HB 6955
Environment Committee March 11, 2015
Amy G. Gagnon

Good afternoon Chairman Kennedy and Chairman Albis and members of the Environment Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to express my support of HB 6955 An Act Prohibiting the Sale and Trade of Ivory and Rhinoceros Horn.

Tens of thousands of African elephants are killed each year solely for their tusks. Likewise, thousands of rhinoceros are killed each year for their horn. These deaths serve absolutely no purpose other than to line the pockets of poachers and facilitate illegal killings and black market trade. Meanwhile, the numbers of these majestic animals dwindle close to extinction. As an advocate for animals, I ask that you please support this important legislation.

I remember as a child my mother allowing my sister and myself to play dress-up with my grandmother's jewelry. Mostly costume, it lived in an old box on a shelf and she took it down for us only occasionally. One of my most vivid memories of the pieces in that box was of a pair of earrings and a necklace of carefully carved roses made of ivory. My mother told my sister and me that they were made of "elephant bones" and that was not something we would ever allow--or want to buy--today. 'Today' was the mid-1970s. The point to this story is that even forty years ago, we showed regret and remorse over killing an animal for a vanity item. It was not necessary then, and it certainly is not necessary today.

Our nation is uniting and letting the world know that we in the US do not condone the needless and illegal killing of animals for their tusks and their horns. Connecticut is not unique in raising this important legislation: constituents as far away as Hawaii are also letting their lawmakers know that they do not support these inhumane and illegal acts. Connecticut IS unique, however, because of its intimate history with ivory processing and the ivory trade. I am lucky to work as a professional historian specializing in Connecticut history, and have studied, at length, the history of ivory in our state. A little over a century ago, 90% of the nation's ivory came into the country via Deep River and Essex. In these quaint Connecticut towns at the mouth of the river, thousands upon thousands of tusks made their way to our shores and people made fortunes from this ivory. Today, we witness the consequences of this on a regular basis as town leaders, residents, and descendants of the families who facilitated the ivory business in Deep River and Essex strive to make reparations to this dark history through education, programs, and awareness. We, as a state, have a duty join these towns as we move towards a more humane future, where it is known that we do not and will not support the killing of innocent animals.

Today, I urge you to please support this important piece of legislation. Not only will our state's history benefit from its support, but the animals whose lives are spared will also thank you.

Thank you again,

Amy G. Gagnon
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