

March 10, 2015

Re: **SUPPORT of HB 6955**, a bill that would shut down market demand for elephant ivory and rhinoceros horns in Connecticut

Dear Co-chair Kennedy, Co-chair Albis, and Honorable Members of the Environment Committee,

Please accept this testimony in SUPPORT of HB 6955.

In 2011, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature declared the West African black rhinoceros extinct, largely due to poaching. This once thriving subspecies joined over a dozen other animals, including the eastern cougar and the Bermuda saw-whet owl, that have gone extinct in this young decade. As Elizabeth Kolbert points out in her recent book *The Sixth Extinction*, these extinctions are not the result of meteors crashing into earth or other natural phenomena, but rather they are due to human activity: anthropogenic climate change, deforestation and habitat destruction, overfishing, and overhunting. Unfortunately, despite the meager safeguards we have put in place to protect vulnerable plant and animal species from facing extinction, these threats still loom large, particularly for elephants and rhinos killed for their ivory and horns.

A ban in Connecticut on the sale of products made of ivory or rhino horns would be one small step towards protecting these animals from the poaching that is ravaging their dwindling populations—poaching that is fueled by a demand for the ivory trinkets that make their way into the U.S. retail market through legal loopholes and poor regulation. Banning the sale of these products in Connecticut effectively reduces this demand and could save many elephants and rhinos from needless, violent deaths. This legislation also sends the important message that these animals are not mere commodities to be used and then discarded—rather, their lives have value beyond the value of their tusks and horns.

Please support HB 6955.

Yours truly,
Anthony and Caitlin Sorge
266 Kasson Rd. Bethlehem, CT 06751