

March 11, 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.

Current federal law is confusing and riddled with loopholes that are exploited by those involved in the international and domestic ivory trade. This also leads to consumer confusion about what is legal and what is not. The result is a flourishing, poorly regulated domestic ivory market in the United States.

- In August 2014, The HSUS led efforts in New York and New Jersey to enact laws to prohibit sale, trade, and possession with intent to sell ivory and rhino horns, becoming the first states to shut down the ivory and rhino horn trade within their borders. This year, up to a dozen U.S. states are considering similar legislation, including California, Illinois, Hawaii, and Massachusetts, which are the top markets for ivory in the nation. These states are taking a robust measure to crack down on the illegal wildlife trade out of a shared concern about the threat of extinction facing these imperiled animals as well as the threat wildlife trafficking poses on our national security. At \$8 to \$10 billion per year, the illegal wildlife trade ranks as the fourth most lucrative international criminal activity, behind only narcotics, counterfeiting, and human trafficking.

- The threat of extinction facing elephants grows daily while poachers and traffickers continue their slaughter and despicable activities unabated. The time for a prohibition on the U.S. domestic ivory markets is now and Connecticut can contribute to the federal, national, and global conservation efforts by closing Connecticut's markets to ivory and rhino horns.

- Elephants are being gunned down and poisoned in unprecedented numbers—reaching nearly 100 killed per day—all for their ivory tusks. Approximately 100,000 elephants in Africa were killed between 2010 and 2012. In 2014, more than 1,000 rhinos were killed in South Africa alone out of a remaining 29,000 left in the wild.

- Poachers kill entire elephant families, including its youngest members as long as they have tusks. Elephant babies, who do not have tusks that have emerged, are left as orphans unable to fend for themselves and often die if not rescued by humans in time.

Thank you,

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