

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.

It is imperative that Connecticut immediately establish clear laws to abolish ivory and horn trade. New York and New Jersey have already prohibited the sale, trade, and possession with intent to sell ivory and rhino horns. Dozens of U.S. states, including California, Illinois, Hawaii and Massachusetts, which are the top markets for ivory in the nation, 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. Regardless of personal beliefs, this is a global issue and must be considered with the utmost urgency and seriousness of the issue, as supported by the facts.

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 is growing daily while poachers and traffickers continue their slaughter and despicable activities unabated. This cruelty is unacceptable. Elephants, who have very complex, highly developed societies, 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. These behaviors reflect poorly on our humanity and we cannot truly call ourselves civilized, as long as we condone, through our laws, these behaviors.

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. Refusal to act, constitutes consent to these atrocities.

Sincerely,
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