

Testimony in SUPPORT of HB No. 6955 AN ACT PROHIBITING THE SALE AND TRADE OF IVORY AND RHINOCEROS HORN

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Dear Honorable Members of the Environment Committee:

As a licensed wildlife rehabilitator, I am gravely concerned about the plight of wild elephants and rhinos. Like our neighbors in New York and New Jersey, Connecticut needs to adopt stricter sanctions against the importation and trade of all elephant ivory and rhino horn. Unfortunately, the current Federal ban is insufficient to stop the trade of poached elephant ivory due to the difficulty in distinguishing between “antique” ivory and artificially aged “new” ivory.

In 2012, more than 30,000 African elephants were slaughtered. Currently it is projected that 96 elephants A DAY are poached in South Africa alone, and 1,215 rhinos were killed there in 2014*. Mothers are slaughtered and their babies are left orphans – thus jeopardizing the next generation. At the current levels of poaching, elephants in the wild will be extinct within 20 years! Additionally, illegal poaching is a national security issue - with much of the profit from this trade going to terrorist organizations.

Globally, the U.S. is second only to China as the largest market for poached ivory. HB 6955 is necessary to stop the movement of this horrific commodity. According to the Wildlife Conservation Society, Connecticut is a key state in stopping this trade because of our dense population and numerous ports.

Extinct is FOREVER. Only a ban on the sale and trade of all ivory and rhino horn will discourage the illegal trafficking of this grotesque product. Connecticut must do what is necessary to ensure that elephants and rhinos continue to exist for future generations – we need HB 6955.

Thank you for your consideration.

*South African Department of Environmental Affairs