

FOR THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING TESTIMONY OF BARRETT S. ROBBINS-PIANKA

February 23, 2016

RE: R. B. 5315

AN ACT CONCERNING THE PREVENTION OF THE HABITUATION OF POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS ANIMALS, THE POSTING OF INFORMATIONAL NOTICES CONCERNING ENCOUNTERS WITH WILDLIFE AND THE STATUS OF SNAPPING TURTLES UNDER STATE LAW

I am a resident of the Maromas area of Middletown with an interest in wildlife, particularly reptiles and amphibians. I strongly support the entirety of R. B. 5315. The majority of my testimony concerns the part of R. B. 5315 which extends "prohibitions concerning the sale or exchange of certain wild animals to snapping turtles."

To: Committee Chairmen Senator Ted Kennedy, Jr. and Representative James Albis; and Honorable Members of the Environment Committee,

Interactions with wildlife are increasing. R. B. 5315 addresses the need to educate citizens with signage regarding wildlife encounters. It is a prudent and low cost proposal that will benefit both citizens and wildlife.

R. B. 5315 also addresses the status of snapping turtles under state law. The existing law needs updating to reflect modern conservation biology. R.B. 5315 removes language that excludes snapping turtles from protection from commercial exploitation. The sentence to be removed was added more than 45 years ago. It is a regulatory carve out, a throwback to the early days of ecological science, before the importance of snapping turtles in maintaining the ecosystem was known. Today, Connecticut's conservation biologists understand the critical role snappers play in maintaining biodiversity and the health of the ecosystem.

R. B. 5315 will end harmful and institutionalized wildlife trafficking in Connecticut. It will end the approval of the sale of the State's snapping turtles to satisfy the ever increasing demand from Asian markets. Rick Jacobson, DEEP Wildlife Division Director, reported that since the year 2000, 12 to 20 **million** turtles per year have been shipped from the United States. This ravenous worldwide demand affects Connecticut's snapping turtles. In 2012, at a DEEP public hearing, a commercial turtle trapper testified that he had taken 10,000 pounds of snapping turtle in six weeks from the freshwater tidal marshes of the Connecticut River, referring specifically to Deep River's Pratt Cove. The provision of R.B. 5315 to protect Connecticut's snapping turtles from commercial exploitation is long overdue.

In addition to recognizing the need to update the antiquated law, Bill 5315 is an act of humanity. I am very thankful to and proud of the Environment Committee for taking note of this ancient species of reptile with whom we share the earth. By removing Connecticut's snapping turtles from wildlife trafficking, you have reduced cruelty in the world and protected our environment. Thank you for Raising HB 5315 for Public Hearing.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify and look forward to a brighter future under law for Connecticut's snapping turtles.

Sincerely,

Barrett S. Robbins-Pianka, Resident

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