



State of Connecticut
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

REPRESENTATIVE MATTHEW LESSER
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CHAIRMAN
BANKING COMMITTEE

MEMBER
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION &
ELECTIONS COMMITTEE

Dear Chairman Albis, Chairman Kennedy, Representative Shaban, Senator Chapin and Honorable Members of the Environment Committee:

I wish to testify in **SUPPORT** of **House Bill 5315**.

I want to thank the committee for raising this legislation.

Rather than try to lay out the scientific, conservation and public health concerns that underlie Section 3 of this proposed legislation, I'll defer to experts who I understand you will hear from shortly.

My goal is to try to explain existing law as best as I can and what this proposal seeks to do.

There are some who will argue that due to unsustainable trapping of snapping turtles, we should ban the trapping of and trade in snapping turtles.

Others argue that turtle meat is unsafe and should be removed from the market due to high concentrations of dioxins and heavy metals.

Those proposals are beyond the scope of this legislation.

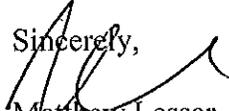
Section 26-78 of the statutes subjects the trade of wild animals including live and dead wild birds, mammals, amphibians and reptiles to state regulation. It is one of the older conservation statutes on our books. It delegates regulatory authority to DEEP.

Forty years ago, the legislature amended the existing statute to prevent DEEP from regulating in any way the trade of only species, snapping turtles. Since then, not one species has been added to the list.

I would submit to you that there is no public policy rationale to differentiate snapping turtles from every other species subject to state regulation. This proposal simply removes the prohibition on DEEP to regulate the trade in snapping turtles.

In the last forty years we have learned a lot about complex ecosystems and the role of scavengers in our environment. Snapping turtles are not just a nuisance species but an important part of our environment. There is no reason why we should continue to prevent DEEP from doing its job to ensure that the trade in turtles is sustainable or that turtle meat is safe.

Thank you for considering this legislation.

Sincerely,

Matthew Lesser