



**Testimony in support of HB 5578**

**AN ACT PROHIBITING THE SALE AND TRADE OF IVORY AND RHINOCEROS HORN.**

**Environment Committee Public Hearing, 3-11-2016**

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Senator Kennedy, Representative Albis and members of the committee, I appreciate the opportunity to express support for HB 5578, which would impose heavy restrictions on the sale and trade of ivory and rhino horn.

As we all know by now, we are facing a crisis of elephants and rhinos nearing extinction, unless decisive and swift policies are implemented at every level of government, across the globe. Ivory and rhino horn are traded because there is a market for pieces made from them. The Federal government recognizes this crisis and the corresponding need for action. President Obama has called the elephant poaching problem an “international crisis” and federal agencies have recognized that the most powerful way to halt the killing is to “take the profit out of this illegal trade with all the tools at our disposal.”

( <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/12/us/politics/obama-administration-to-target-illegal-wildlife-trafficking.html?emc=eta1&r=1> )

Federal law does not, and probably will not, address the trade of ivory within states. To close this loophole, our neighboring states of New York State and New Jersey have both decisively prohibited the sale of ivory. Connecticut is now a convenient target for those looking to relocate ivory transactions.

I believe at the heart of this issue is the fact that newly poached ivory is frequently disguised as antique ivory. This fools the unsuspecting, non-expert consumer, and allows the trade to flourish.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – the agency responsible for policy-making on the Ivory trade -- states: “we believe a substantial amount of elephant ivory is illegally imported and enters the domestic market. It is extremely difficult to differentiate legally acquired ivory from ivory derived from elephant poaching. Our criminal investigations and anti-smuggling efforts have clearly shown that legal ivory trade can serve as a cover for illegal trade.”

(<http://www.fws.gov/international/travel-and-trade/ivory-ban-questions-and-answers.html#11>)

If we're going to be serious about stopping the ivory trade, we also have to stop the "antique" trade in ivory.

Ivory is a material of the past - it is a historical artifact and a stark reminder of the horrific cruelty inflicted on both African people and their elephants. Ivory was certainly made into what many believe to be beautiful objects. To me, these objects embody a striking paradox of beauty and cruelty. And it is my personal belief that, given the magnitude of the poaching crisis in Africa, there is no reason our modern society should continue to treat ivory as a "collector's item" – rather, ivory should be channeled to museums and historical societies where the public can be reminded of our past, and study the historical and artistic complexity of these pieces.

It is nearly too late for rhinos, and the elephants are quickly running out of time. Please support HB 5578 and ensure that Connecticut's markets are closed to ivory. Thank you.