

## **Testimony for 3/11 public hearing-- SUPPORT HB 5578 (prohibits sale and trade of ivory and rhinoceros horn)**

Dear Co-Chair Kennedy, Co-Chair Albis, and Honorable Members of the Environment Committee,

Please accept this as my testimony in **SUPPORT of HB 5578, AN ACT PROHIBITING THE SALE AND TRADE OF IVORY AND RHINOCEROUS HORN.**

**I vote, and this issue is important to me.**

I support HB 5578 because:

My name is Debbie Dembo from Chester and I am testifying in support of HB 5578. My newly acquired Swahili name is Mama Tembo, mother of elephants. I was so named, on a recent rip to East Africa where I was completely taken in by the landscape, the Kenyan people and the abundance of animals. Sadly, the elephant population is significantly diminished due to continued poaching.

Ironically, I live in the area of CT that prospered in the 19<sup>th</sup> century from the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of elephants for their ivory tusks used to make piano keys. This forever changed the landscape of the African Savannah where there were 3-5 million elephants when Carl Akeley, conservationist, visited Kenya nearly a century ago. Continued sale of ivory today perpetuates continued elephant poaching, often by terrorist groups used to fund their terrorist activities.

I am involved with Space for Giants <https://spaceforgiants.org> , which is uniting African countries in anti-poaching efforts, raising money and awareness through volunteer programs, and supporting Rapid Response Teams who take on poachers face to face, putting their lives at risk. I participated in a 100 mile trek <http://www.elephantearth.org> to raise money to support this critical work by Space for Giants.

Most importantly, I feel that elephants should be protected and revered for their unique place, as the largest mammals on earth. There is no way I can describe the feeling I got seeing orphaned baby elephants running back to the Sheldick preserve <http://www.sheldrickwildlifetrust.org> for their evening meal. It is better said by Mary Akeley, wife of Carl Akeley, in describing her husband's reverence for elephants in the following statement:

Of all the animals that he encountered in his years in Africa, the elephant was perhaps the one that Carl admired and respected the most..... No other creature seemed to him so intelligent, so courageous, or so nearly possessed of human characteristics, and nothing gave him more satisfaction than fresh discoveries about 'Tembo,' whom he regarded as a friend....

*Adventures in the African Jungle*, by Carl and Mary Jobe Akeley.

Sale of illegal ivory continues in the United States. This greed must end. We have a moral obligation to fulfill our role in the global effort to protect the remaining elephant population and ensure the survival of the species. Elephants must be protected.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Deborah Dembo

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